DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 258 900 SO 016 652

AUTHOR	Gibbons, Joan; And Others
TITLE	Peoples, Processes and Patterns: Japan.
INSTITUTION	City of Birmingham Polytechnic (England). Dept. of Art.
PUB DATE	81
NOTE	95p.; Developed by the Ethnographic Resources for Art Education Project. This project was funded with assistance from the Manpower Services Commission. For related documents, see SO 016 651 and ED 249 157-158. Illustrations may not reproduce clearly.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Art; *Art Education; *Asian History; *Asian Studies; *Cross Cultural Studies; Cultural Differences; *Cultural Education; *Design Crafts; Elementary Secondary Education; Ethnography; Folk Culture; Instructional Improvement; Instructional Materials; Student Projects; Teaching Guides; Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS	*Japan

ABSTRACT

Designed for use by elementary and secondary teachers but useful to anyone interested in Japanese art, this booklet considers the ways in which design issues have been solved in Japanese culture, both in the past and the present. Following a discussion of major Japanese design concepts and Japanese motifs, the text traces the historical development of Japanese art from the Joman period (up to 200 B.C.) to the Edo period (1615-1868). Subsequent sections focus on other Japanese art patterns and processes including calligraphy, seals, paper, packaging, tea ceremonies, and Japanese gardens. These worksheets are designed to involve the students in understanding the principles of Japanese design by working on projects which use these principles and Japanese methods. Throughout the booklet religious belief systems underlying design ideas are covered, as well as the concept of space, which is seen in the context of a densely populated and highly urbanized environment. The book concludes with a glossary, a list of additional resources, and a bibliography. (IS)

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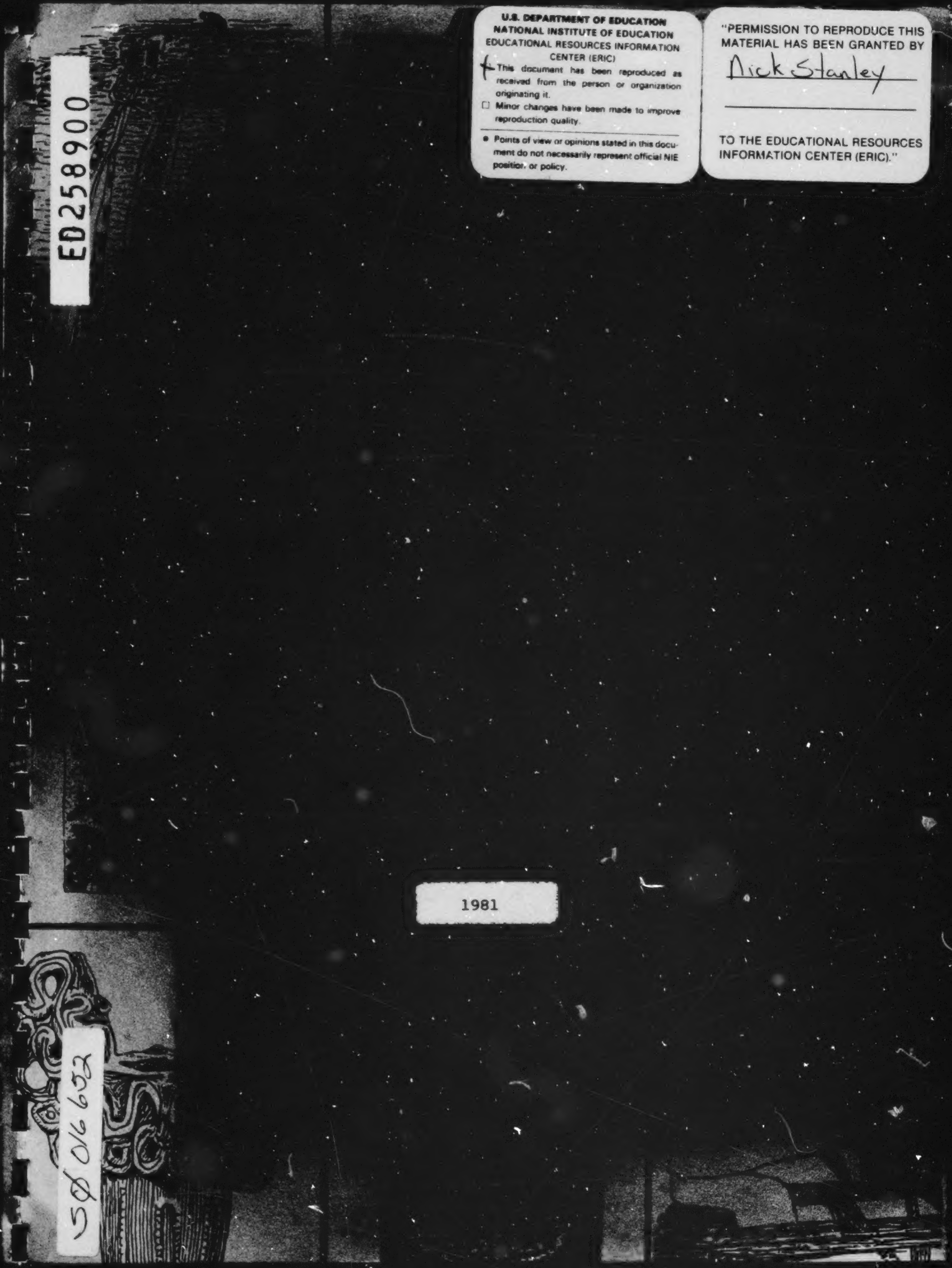

1981

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PEOPLES PROCESSES AND PATTERNS

JAPAN

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Worksheets	Text, Layout	Worksheets
Illustration	Illustrations	Illustrations
	Printing	Printing

This publication was supported by the Manpower Services Community Programme and by the Ethnographic Resources for Art Education project in the Department of Art, City of Birmingham Polytechnic.

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Peoples, Processes and Patterns

Introduction

This joint pack represents the fourth publication from the Ethnographic Resources for Art Education project in the Department of Art, Birmingham Polytechnic. Like its predecessors (Pottery Cultures; Dyed and Printed Textiles; and Playthings as Art Objects) this pack considers ways in which design issues have been both traditionally and currently resolved in other cultures. This has involved looking at design processes in action in two quite different contexts. These have been deliberately chosen to challenge our normal expectations about what design consists of. We hope that through the exploration of some aspects of Islamic and Japanese design the reader will not only consider insights provided by these examples but also be encouraged to translate some of the ideas into practical classroom activities. To this end the materials gathered together in both sections of the pack have been considered by ourselves and teachers in schools. The result has been the collection of work sheets and guidelines incorporated in each booklet. These provide practical examples of how the materials can be used in school. They are only illustrative and should be considered as initial ideas. We hope you will find other ways of tackling the topics according to your interest and circumstance. Our central objective is that the design issues are seen in the context of their creation in a particular cultural setting, which involves some appreciation of wider considerations (historical, religious, political and social). We believe that it is only by seriously studying other ways of thinking, designing, and creating that we appreciate the power and limitations of our own conceptual framework.

You will find that both parts of the pack deal with religious belief systems underlying the design activity. Environmental issues are also stressed in the Islamic section. The importance of different life styles, nomadic and settled, is allied to products associated with each: woven architecture (tents and hangings) is seen as the setting for the examination in particular of carpet design whilst the urban world is the natural context for the study of tile deisng. The concept of space is particularly stressed in the Japanese section and is seen in the context of a densely populated and highly urbanized environment. Technology is a factor which cannot be divorced from the study of design. It is perhaps interesting and instructive to note how Japanese design consciousness has had a major impact on European and North American society. The oil wealth of Saudi Arabia has provided the impetus for a revival and development of traditional design (especially in architectural restoration) as well as taking design into the age of satellite technology.

The research, the writing, the design and layout, the illustrations and the printing are all the work of the team of five research assistants who have spent some thirteen months on this collaborative project. Despite the very valuable specialist advice acknowledged in both booklets this product is experimental and not offered as a definitive answer. It is, however, put forward as an example of how artists, craftspersons, and designers can, without previous specialist knowledge, reach out and explore the experience of another culture. It is an opportunity which we are sure can be usefully grasped by teachers and pupils alike. We would appreciate your comments on the uses and limitations of this pack.

Acknowledgements

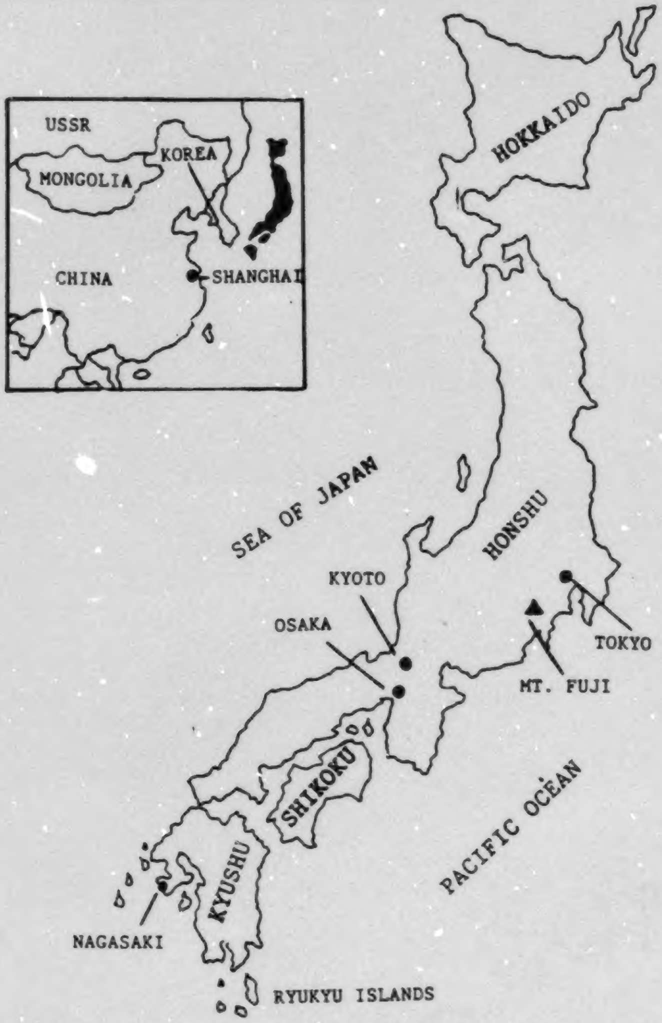
We would like to thank the following individuals for their help and interest in the production of this pack:Ms Penelope Martin,Courtauld Fabric Group,London, Mike Hitchcock and Keith Nicklin,Horniman Museum, London, Mavis Pilbeam,Japan Information Centre,London,Mary Wills, Joseph Camberlain Sixth Form College,Birmingham,Mr Cranstone and Sue Walker,Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford,Jennifer Scarce, The Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh,Gerald Harvey-Lago, Westhill College, Birmingham,Toshio Watanabe,Department of Art, Birmingham Polytechnic.

JAPANESE DESIGN

- This section examines the major Japanese design concepts.

In Japan pattern and stylization not only in the visual arts but in custom, ettiquette and attitudes of mind can be seen as evidence of an underlying desire to come to terms with the natural world. Value is placed on both the visual and sensuous impact of an object taken as a whole, whether it is a simple woven basket, the pattern inherent in the process of production, or a highly decorated laquer box. The cultural attitudes of the tea ceremony are a reflection of this total approach to environment, encompassing architecture, garden and interior design, dress, utensils and behavior.

Japanese design has its base in the physically insecure environment of the islands. Because of earthquakes, volcanoes, landslides, typhoons, and tidal waves--a constant threat to survival--the Japanese developed an acute awareness of natural phenomena and learned to adapt themselves to changes in their environment.


USSR
MONGOLIA
KOREA
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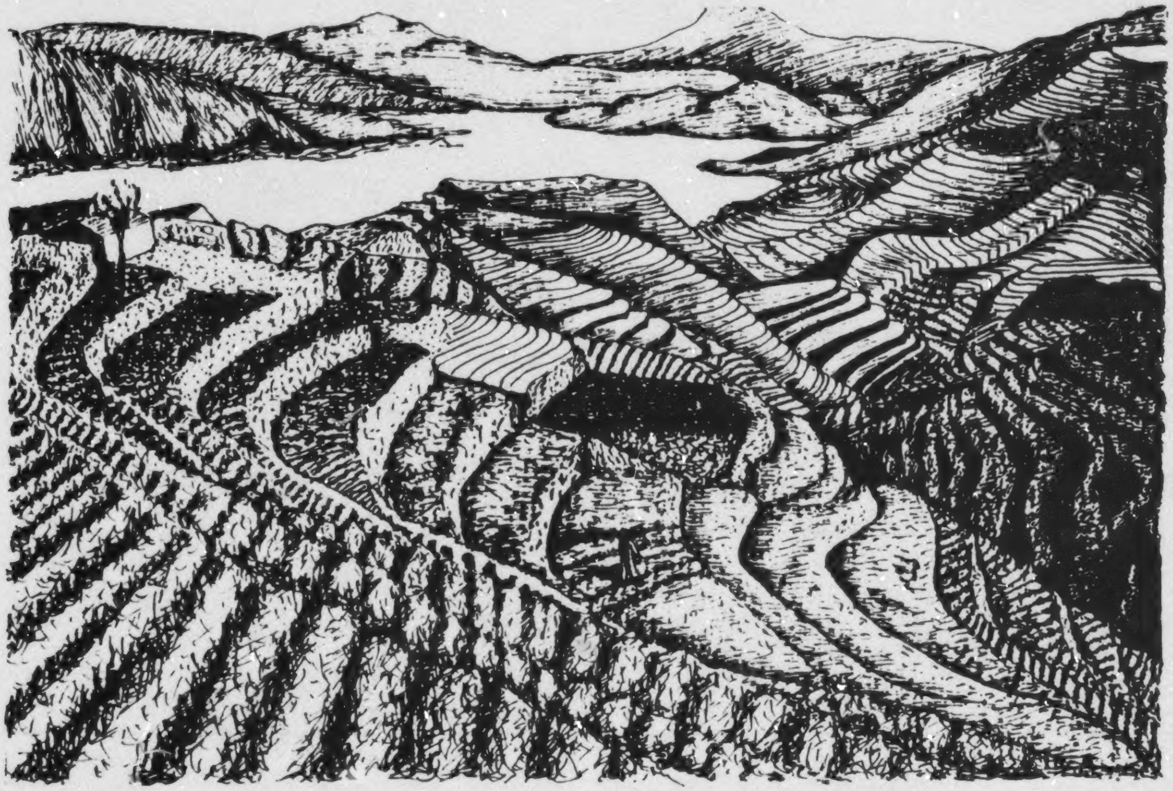
SHANGHAI
HOKKAIDO
SEA OF JAPAN
HONSHU
KYOTO
OSAKA
TOKYO
MT. FUJI
SHIKOKU
PACIFIC OCEAN
KYUSHU
NAGASAKI
RYUKYU ISLANDS

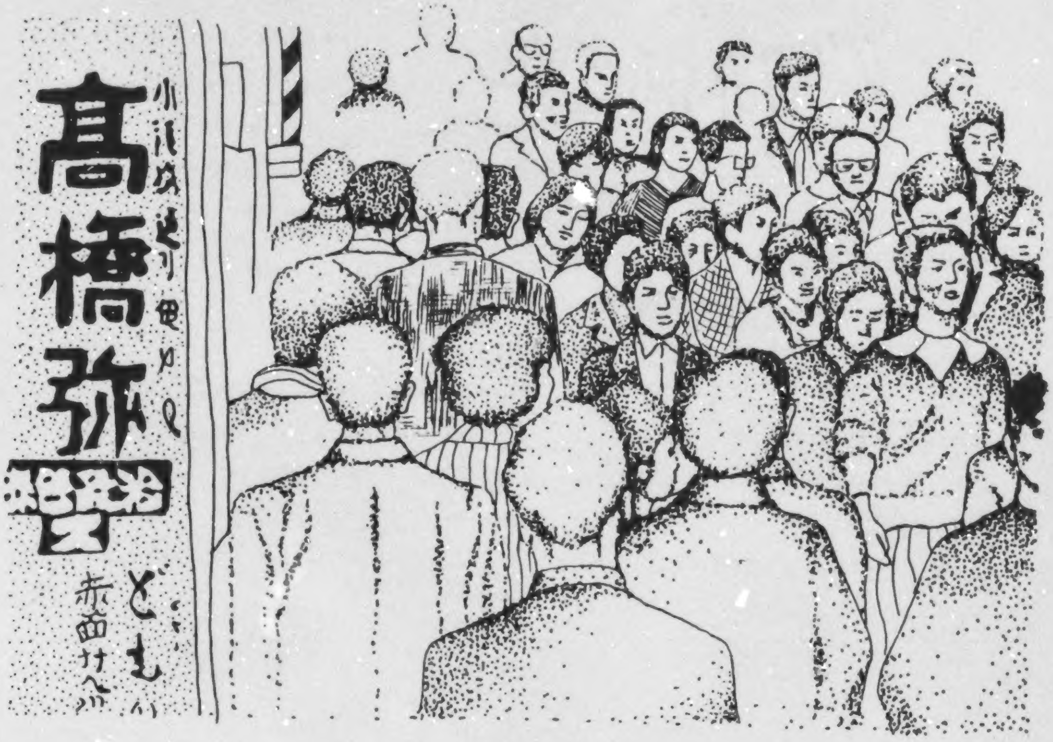
Japan is made of up 4 main islands, and more than 3,000 islets. The archipelago stretches in an arc along the north eastern pacific coast of the Asian continent.

Japan is an extremely mobile civilization that has experienced numerous struggles against both man and nature. Therefore physical culture has developed to be replaceable, renewable, or portable. The methods of packaging protect items of value for storage while remaining small and light enough to be easily carried. The furoshiki (carrying cloth) is a good example of an economical method of transporting items. The cloth can be folded and packed away when not in use, so occupying the minimum of space.

The acute lack of space in Japan (a land with a vast population in a small area) has had a great effect on every aspect of Japanese daily life. The maximum use of the minimum space is well illustrated by the interior design of Japanese houses. Interior space is partitioned by shoji (sliding doors made of thin wood and covered with translucent paper) and sometimes by folding screens. Room functions are totally interchangeable, daily activities and sleeping can be done in the same area, the futons (matresses) being stored in a closet during the day. Tatami (straw mats) cover the floors and determine the dimensions of a room. A standard tatami mat is 6ft x 3ft and room sizes are given in mats: a six mat room, a two mat room, etc.

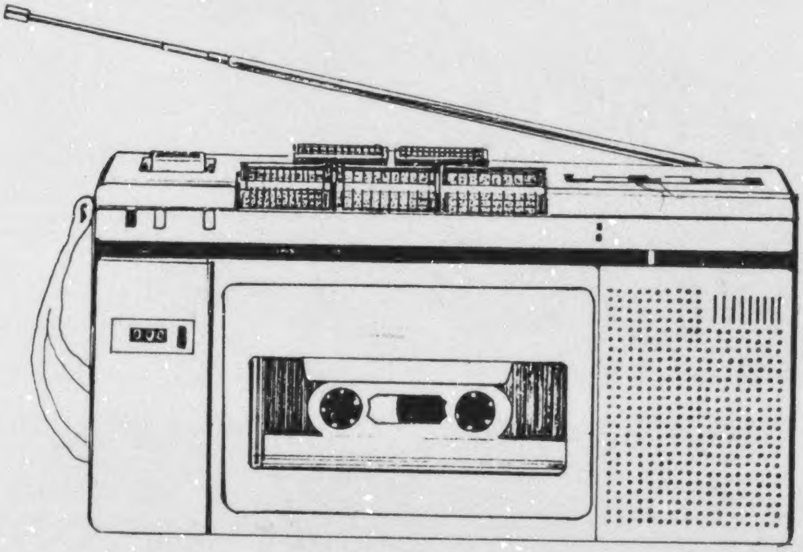


Every available flat area is intensively cultivated, usually for rice. Any bare, unforested hillside is terraced. Tiers of rice are cut like enormous steps that follow the contours of the winding slopes.



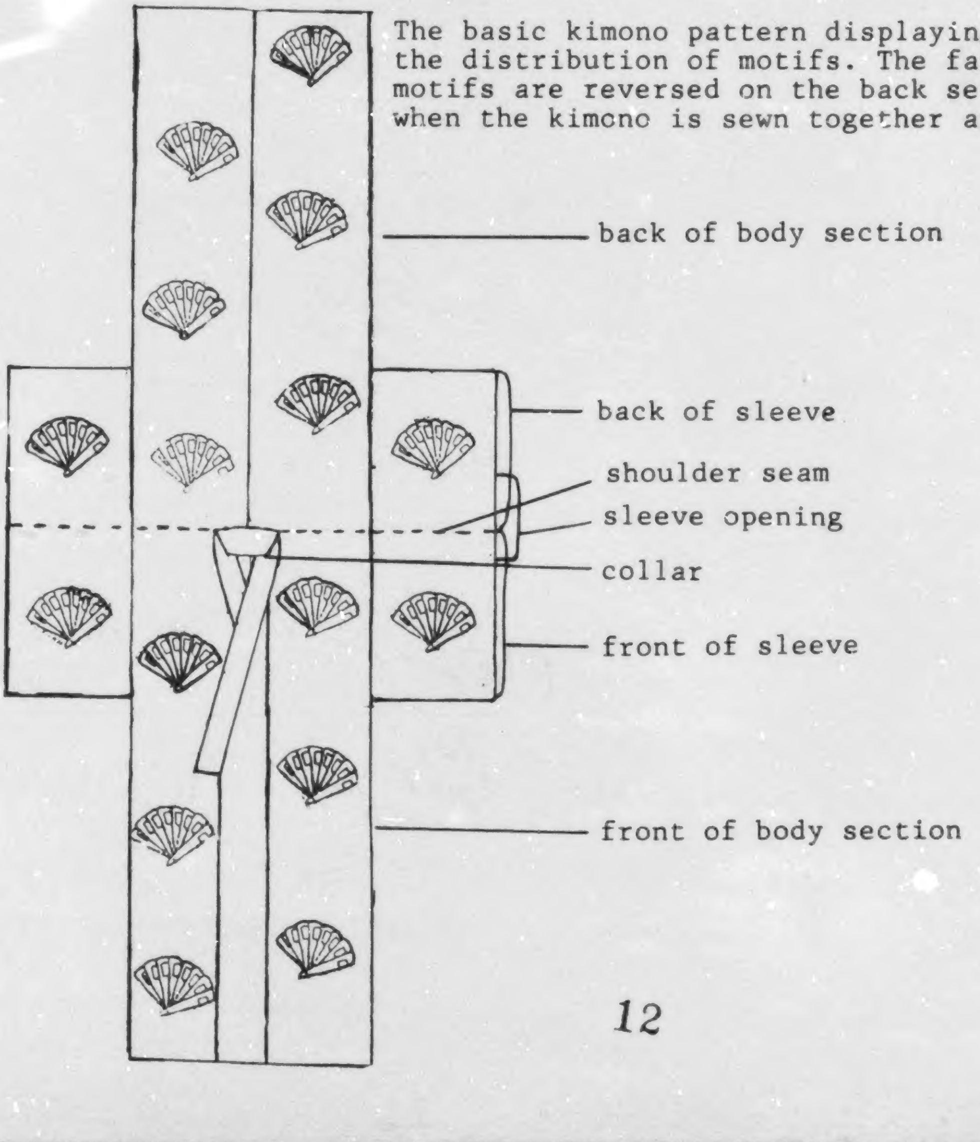
Tokyo is one of the most densely populated cities in the world.

Compactness is, and always has been, an essential feature of Japanese design. The traditional pocket sized box, yatate (used for carrying writing equipment) and the Japanese compact personal stereo popular today can be seen as expressions of this attitude towards design.



- Continuity and Adaptability

The quality of continuity is also emphasized both in the adaptability of artifacts and the patterned arrangements upon them. In the west, beauty is usually framed or made into a complete entity that is set up as an adornment to daily life. In contrast to this, Japanese expressions of the aesthetic sense are based upon rearrangements of life's ordinary or daily items into a form that shows their natural beauty and enhances their overall environment. There is less sense of imposed form than in the west. The construction of the *kimono* from straight strips of cloth displays this approach. Because the lengths of fabric continue from front to back without shoulder seams, unless the *kimono* has a geometric pattern, the front and back of the design are reversed. The pattern appears continuous and boundaries are uncertain.

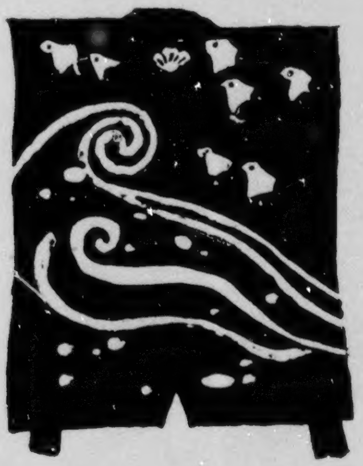


The basic kimono pattern displaying the distribution of motifs. The fan motifs are reversed on the back section when the kimono is sewn together and worn.

Continuity and Adaptability

The world of Japanese beauty is the world of the incomplete. The emphasis upon the continuity of form is related to the concept of nagare 'flow' (flow of life. In Shinto, Japan's national religion, the emphasis is upon the positive effects of change and renewal.). For instance in gardens geometrically executed formations would seem to the Japanese less a place to repose than a rigid mathematical demonstration. The perfect asks our admiration rather than our participation.

> The perfect is static and regulated, cold and hard... since everything is apparent from the start there is no suggestion of the infinite. (Soetsu Yanagi, The Unknown Craftsman)



Actor's robe with a design of plovers in flight and a wave. The arrangement is asymmetrical with areas of space.

Asymmetric Arrangement

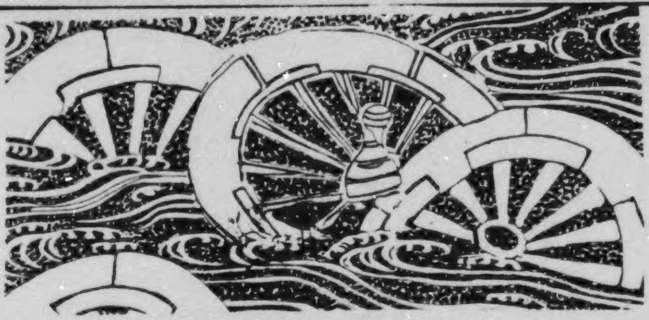
In any arrangement of forms the Japanese favour the asymmetrical. This seems to be derived from their close observation of nature and its display of chance ordering: flowers appear where seeds fall, bushes and plants do not grow in straight lines, and rocks and stones do not have squared edges. Perfect symmetry, then, is avoided in a composition because flawless and matched designs lack movement and vitality. The aim in Japanese design is to extract the essence of nature and then express it in a simplified, even symbolic, form. Simplicity is favoured because the mystery of nature can only be suggested, and the simpler the suggestion the greater its effectiveness. Thus, an artistically created void in time or space becomes an important aesthetic consideration.

In all Japanese design the motif is the dominant unit, it is often traditional and with literary overtones.

The motifs are used as if they were part of a pattern book; they are kept intact within their perimeters but are moved about and adjusted in relation to other motifs. The final location of a motif seems almost always to be intuitive and based on the asumption of asymmetrical balance or tension.

For example the cartwheel motif (fig. 1) is used in the kimono design (fig. 2) where it is kept intact and adjusted in relation to the other motifs.

Fig. 1



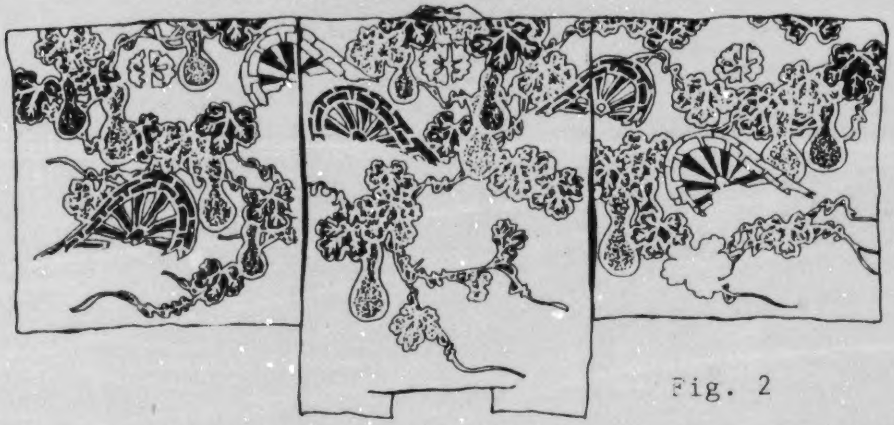
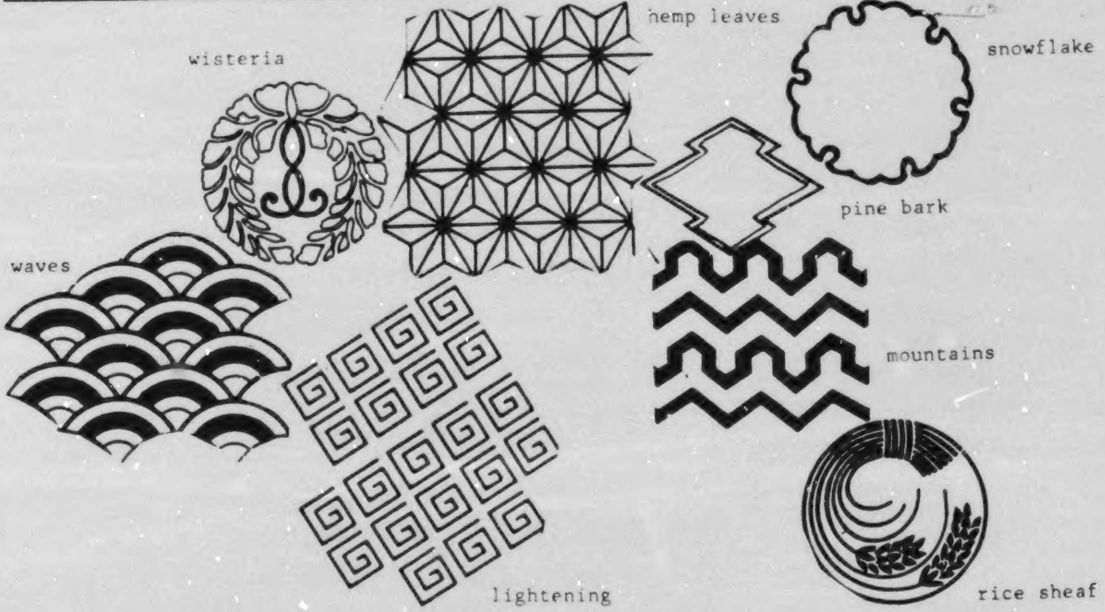
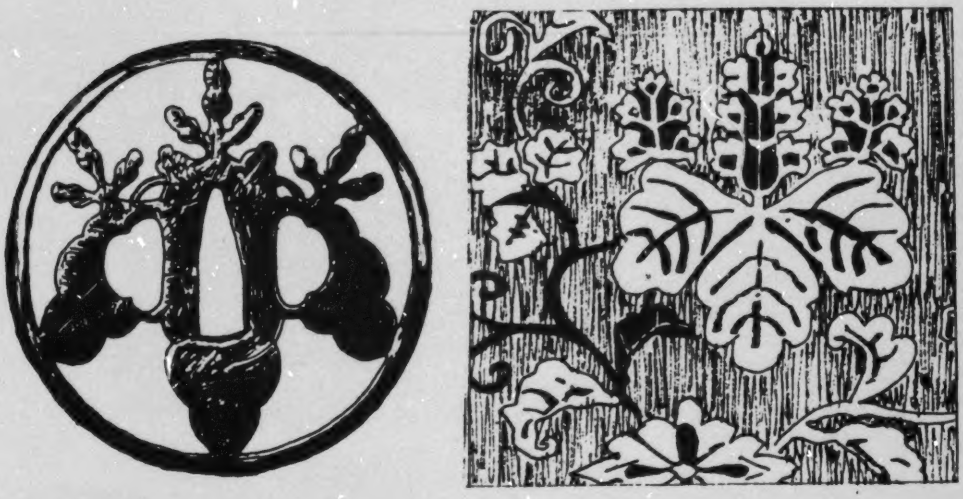


Fig. 2

The Shinto faith particularizes nature with its many thousands of kami (anything that can inspire a feeling of awe, reverence, or mystery) personifying individual units such as rocks, trees, streams, caves, and flowers. In this manner the uniqueness of individual units is accepted forming a sort of natural order of motifs. Images taken from the natural world do account for a large percentage of Japanese decorative motifs.


hemp leaves
wisteria
snowflake
pine bark
waves
mountains
lightening
rice sheaf

- The variety of Japanese design motifs is wide, the range of applications is even wider. The same patterns, or closely related ones, appear on textiles, furniture, ceramics, weaponts and architectural elements. The variety of decorative motifs can be explained by the Japanese conviction that the ornamentation of daily life is vital.



The Paulowina motif is used in many designs. These two examples show its interpretation in metal work and textiles.

Living National Treasures

Japan introduced legislation in 1950 to preserve traditional crafts by designating 'living national treasures', or more precisely 'holders of intangible cultural properties'. This is unique in that it applies not only to tangible cultural properties like fine classic paintings and sculptures but also to invisible ones like techniques and skills of performing arts and crafts. As these techniques cannot exist without human beings embodying them, the law designates such persons as objects of protection. The Japanese government's cultural agency actively sponsors regular exhibitions and training courses for successors.

This singling out of individuals as holders of important skills in traditional arts and crafts is unique to Japan, and no other nation seems to have valued the things of beauty in daily life in quite the same way.

● However, decoration and the technique in which it is executed must be integrated with the form and function of the object. In Yanagi's words 'every craftsman must consider three natural limitations: the purposes for which a given article is used, the nature of the materials employed, the appropriate techniques'.

Japanese craftsmen have perfected techniques of carving, painting, laquering, dyeing and weaving to given permanent expression to decorative motifs and always 'the disciplines of process decide the character of pattern'. The popularity of certain motifs has remained fairly constant throughout the history of Japanese arts and crafts; others have enjoyed a cyclical popularity fading out of fashion in one era only to reappear with renewed favour and with modifications a few decades later.

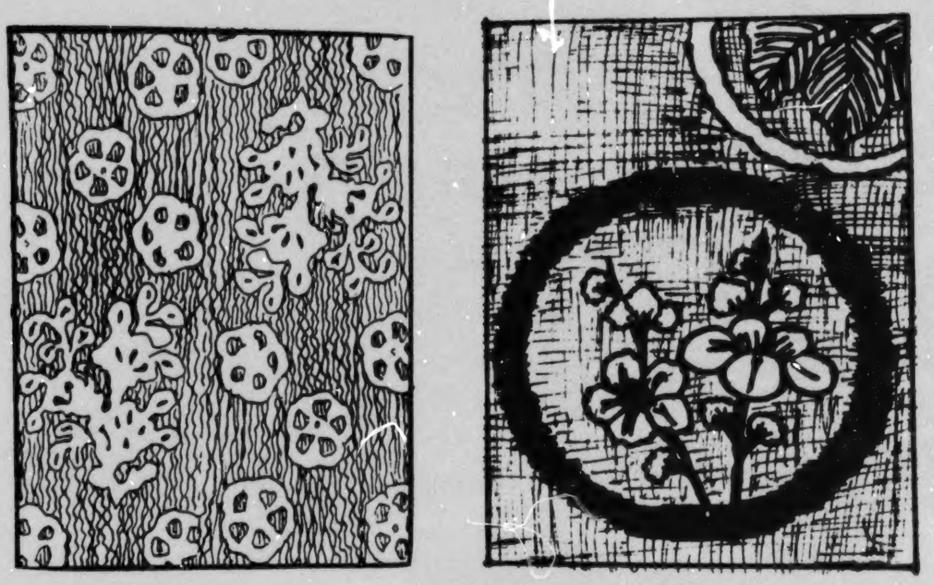


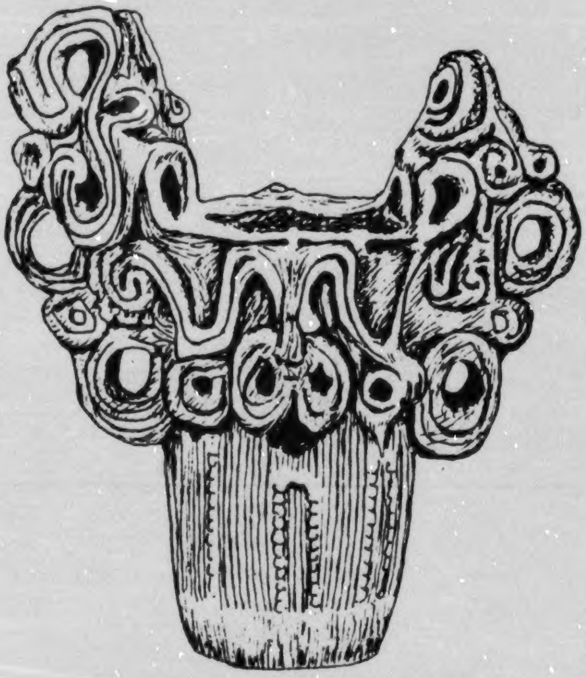
Fig. 1

Fig. 2

The plum blossom has always been a popular design motif in Japan. Because it is the first flower to bloom in spring, the plum blossom symbolizes bravery. The motif was used as early as the Nara period (fig. 1) and still appears in the Momoyama period fabric (fig. 2).

- Jomon Period (up to 200 BC)

For the earliest Japanese who were hunters and fishers clay was one of the earliest materials to obtain and work by hand into utensils needed for daily cooking and storage. Before firing the ware simple designs were added on the exterior surface of the vessels, to ornament them, and to complete the vessel's shape. Most commonly used were strings or cords impressed into the clay. The rope-like impressions produced by the cords are so prevalent on the pottery of the time that they gave their name (jomon means 'cord pattern') to the whole culture. More elaborately raised patterns were produced by affixing thin cords of clay to the surface of the vessels.

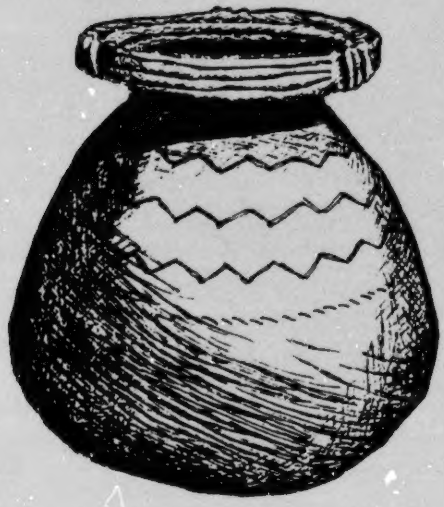


In this vessel the combination of impressed patterns and relief bands create a bold variation of texture.

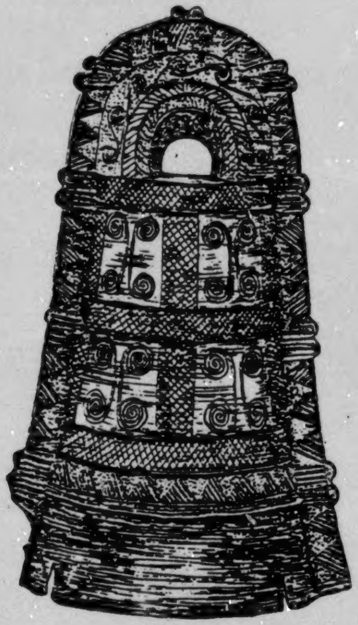
It is possible that these Jomon patterns echo those made by weaving baskets from braided vines. The patterns are characterized by oblique lines, spirals and coils, as well as diamonds, circles, yamagata (mountain shape lines), and herringbone patterns

- Yayoi Period (200 BC-250 AD)

Following the Jomon period the introduction of rice cultivation from the continent gave rise to the Yayoi culture, based on this new means of livelihood. Decorative patterns take a subordinate role to form, and are reduced to flat motifs. During this period techniques of making bronze and working with iron were introduced from the continent. Bronze objects known as dotaku were produced and were probably used as ritual bells. On their surfaces appear geometrical patterns of coils, running water motifs, lattices, triangles, and human figures.



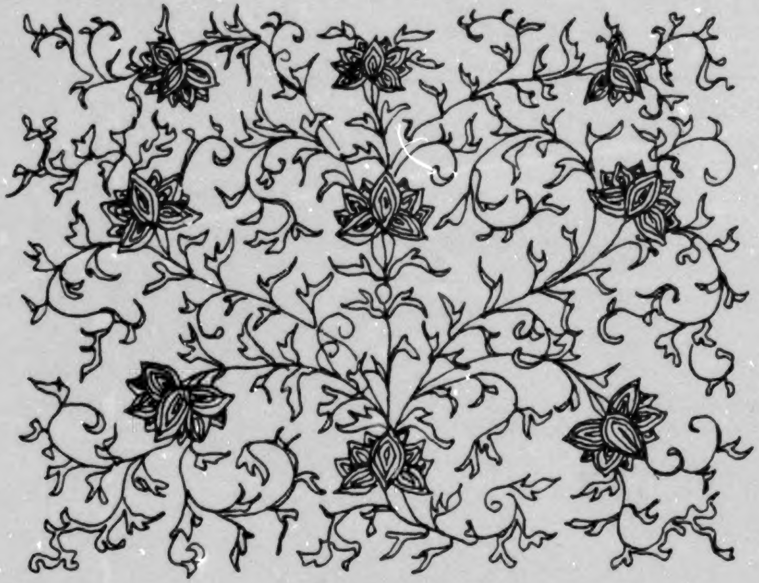
A clay pot with an incised design.



A metal dotaku

In general, decorative motifs change character according to variations in techniques and materials. In the Kofun period motifs became increasingly complex. Metal wares were often ornamented with Chinese-inspired designs such as dragons and the four traditional divinities (green dragon of the East, white tiger of the West, red phoenix of the South, black snake-tortoise of the North). Combinations of birds, animals, and flowers were used and also complex patterns that combined animals, birds, and flowers with the karakusa motif. The latter is a continuous scrolling vine, not unlike the arabesque.

Thus the direct and powerful jomon patterns, the carefully constructed formal yayoi patterns, and the designs of the Kofun period incorporating the traditions and characteistics of continental styles are the basis of all later developments in Japanese pattern making.



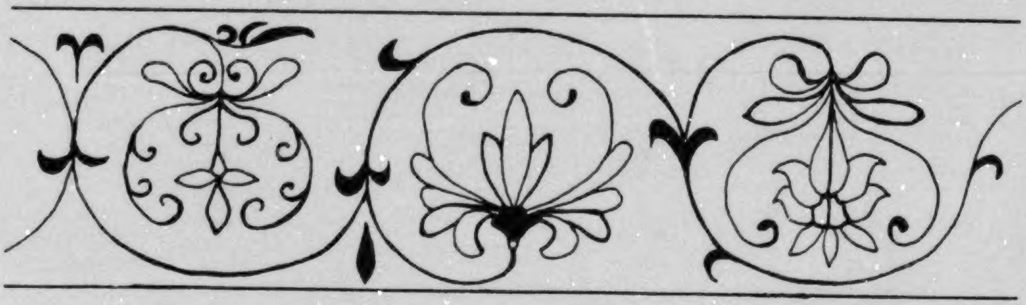
An example of the Karakusa motif.

Asuka Period (552-645)

Buddhism reached Japan by the mid-sixth century. From its origins in India roughly a thousand years earlier, the doctrine had passed through central Asia into China before crossing to Japan by way of the Korean peninsula. Buddhism carried with it to Japan an accumulation of local crafts and artistic traditions from the various cultures of Asia.

During the Asuka period Buddhism won many devout adherents in Japan, most eminent of all was Shotoku Taishi, Prince Regent during the reign of the Empress Suiko. Enthusiastically encouraged by the court, the religion flourished. The arts and architecture of the Asuka period were strongly influenced by the styles of the six dynasties period (c. 222-589AD) in China as modified by their passage through the Korean peninsula. The single most significant motif of this time was the nindo-mon or honeysuckle pattern. Long before its arrival in Japan, the honeysuckle motif was used in Greece and the Middle

The arrangement of the honeysuckle motif can vary to adapt to any given area or contour, and its component parts lend themselves to endless variations. Other patterns introduced from the continent were also used by ed by craftsmen. These included bird and animal motifs, lotus, clouds, four-petaled flowers, and four-leaf patterns.



The nindo-mon or honeysuckle pattern.

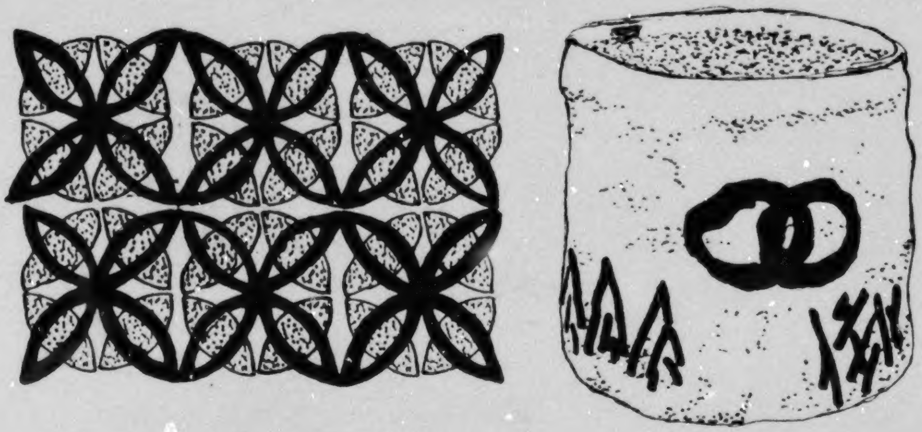
Nara Period (645-794)

During the Asuka period Chinese cultural influences reached Japan only indirectly, passing first through the Korean peninsula. But with the establishment of the T'ang rule in China, direct communication via diplomatic envoys and trade was established between China and Japan. Buddhism continued to expand and develop. The enthusiastic programme of temple construction carried out in and around the capital city of Nara encouraged new developments in the decorative arts in the making of ritual objects for temple use. Inspired by the T'ang example, the numbers and variety of ornamental motifs grew rapidly. These motifs appeared in many different compositions, symmetric and asymmetric, regular, random, and pictorial arrangement.

The Shosoin Repository

A great quantity of artifacts from the Nara period are preserved in the Shosoin. In 756AD on the 49th day after the death of the Emperor Shomu, his widow dedicated to the great Buddha of the Todaiji temple over six hundred objects that had been among the late Emperor's personal effects. These treasures of the Nara court were placed in the Shosoin repository, a large storehouse built within the grounds of the Todai-ji. Detailed catalogues accompanied the gifts providing an accurate record of the original contents.

Design motifs of the Nara period owed much to the inspiration of the arts of T'ang China. The T'ang Empire stretched far across Western Asia and absorbed influences of other regions of Central Asia through the trade route known as the Silk Road. As well as exotic motifs based on animals unknown in the far east, such as parrots, and peacocks, the overall interlocking circle pattern evolved during this period. Known in Japan as the shippo tsunagi or 'seven jewel motif' after the seven precious substances of the Buddhist scriptures: gold, silver, lapis lazuli, crystal, coral, agate, and pearl.

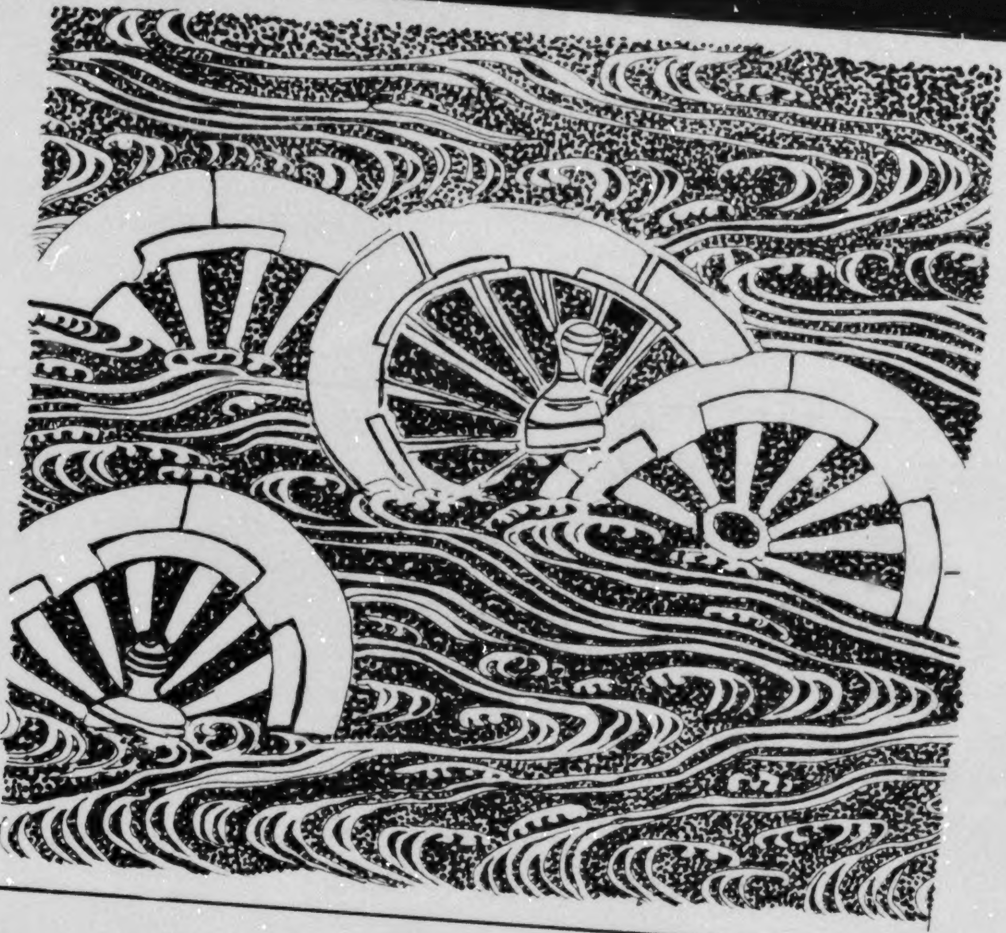


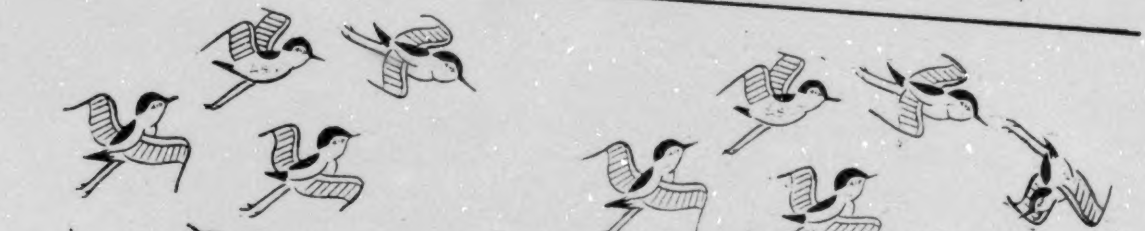
Two examples of the shippo tsungi motif.

Heian Period (794-1185)

This period can be seen as a time of transition during which the Chinese influenced upon the arts gradually gave way to an original Japanese style. The Heian court turned its attention to literary and artistic pursuits, this was the period in which Lady Murasaki wrote The Tale of Genji.

In design, motifs taken from nature were especially preferred during this period. Simply depicted natural scenes were valued more than conventionalized landscapes. The Plover motif was often used in designs. It was valued for its simplicity as well as its suggestion of movement. A group of plovers in flight seem to dart to and fro across a laquer box or a sutra cover. This period also saw the use of certain flowers to represent different seasons in designs as well as motifs taken from everyday life. Wooden cart wheels being soaked in a shallow stream was a popular design. This was a regular sight as soaking the wheels stoped them drying out and cracking.





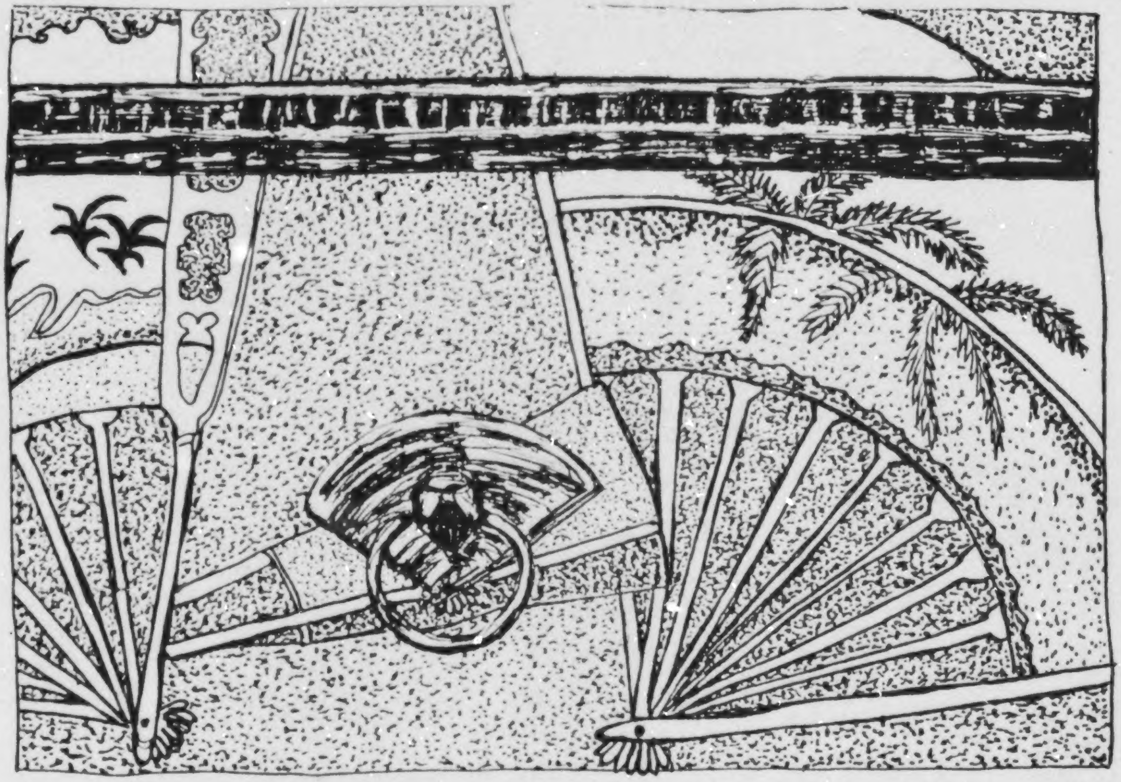
Anthology of the Thirty Six Poetic Geniuses.

The *Heian* court was keen to collect together the finest examples of literature and produced the *Anthology of the Thirty Six Poetic Geniuses*, a collection of the best known verses of outstanding poets of the *Nara* and *Heian* periods. These were copied onto specially prepared decorated papers. Various collage techniques including layered or torn patches of paper created backgrounds of soft colour harmonies. Stamped designs and freehand sketches in gold and silver of landscapes, flower and birds were applied to the papers. Finallly the poems were inscribed in a cursive script by the finest calligraphers of the day. A large variety of motifs appear on the papers along with a marbled effect *suminagashi*.

Kamakura Period (1185-1392)

At the end of the twelfth century political power shifted from the aristocracy to the military. Whilst the court remained in Kyoto making it the cultural centre of the country,the centre of government was moved to Kamakura in the east.The turbulence that surrounded the transfer of power soon subsided and the new military leaders brought in a period of relative calm. Assuming the life style of the aristocracy these new leaders became the new patrons of the arts. Although decorative motifs themselves did not really change their manner of expression gradually altered.

Patterns based upon intellectual arrangements of diverse elements were most popular in the *Kamakura* period. For instance the metal fittings of laquer boxes might echo the major motif used in the decoration of the box, which could in turn be inlaid with mother-of-pearl. The various techniques displayed the achievements of different craftsmen. Another 'intellectual' pattern arrangement was the inclusion of characters in design. The characters may form a pun on the components of a design or may refer to a famous poem on which a design may be based. This pattern is known as *ashide*.



The metal fitting of this kamakura laquered box echoes the major fan motif.

Muromachi Period (1392-1568)

After the introduction of Zen to Japan during the Kamakura period, Japanese monks travelled regularly to China for religious studies and returned with artifacts from the continent. Trade relations with China later in the period brought an increase in imported objects but these remained with the aristocrats or in the temples. The Yüan and Ming Chinese decorative styles reflected in these objects were not available to the majority of Japanese. However, Yoshimasa, the eighth Ashikaga Shogun encouraged the imitation of Chinese styles by Japanese craftsmen. The Chinese influence was particularly apparent in the laquer ware of the Muromachi period, although Chinese themes and techniques appeared in painting and other arts. The tea ceremony which originated in China developed in Japan during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries taking an increasingly Japanese aesthetic in the various arts that it inspired.

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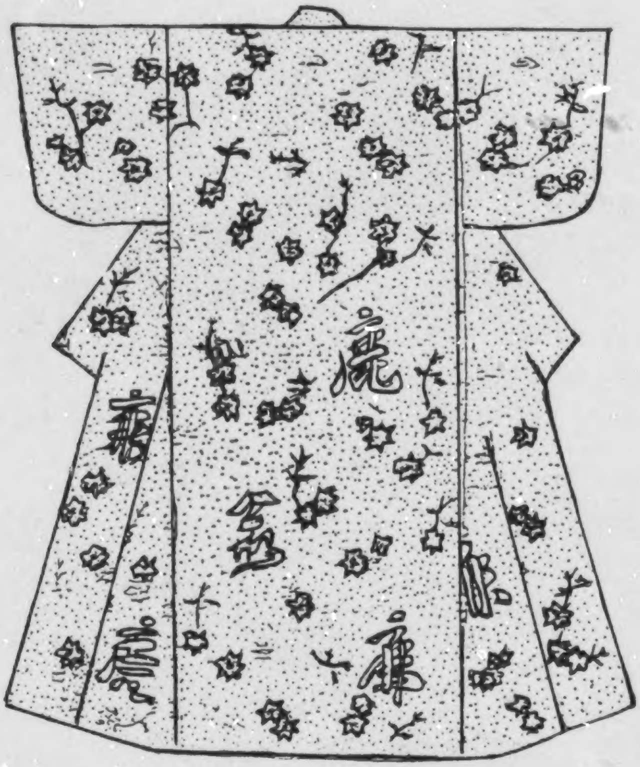
- Ashide decoration continued to be popular. A few key characters selected from a poem and carefully fitted into a design to enhance its meaning formed a unified decoration unique to Japan. The variety of naturalistic motifs continued to multiply and were often exaggerated in size to emphasize seasons or seen from uncharacteristic viewpoints. For example flowers were drawn as if seen from the back.



This kimono displays a bold use of the Ashide decoration. The character for deer is printed along with maple leaves, creating a striking effect.

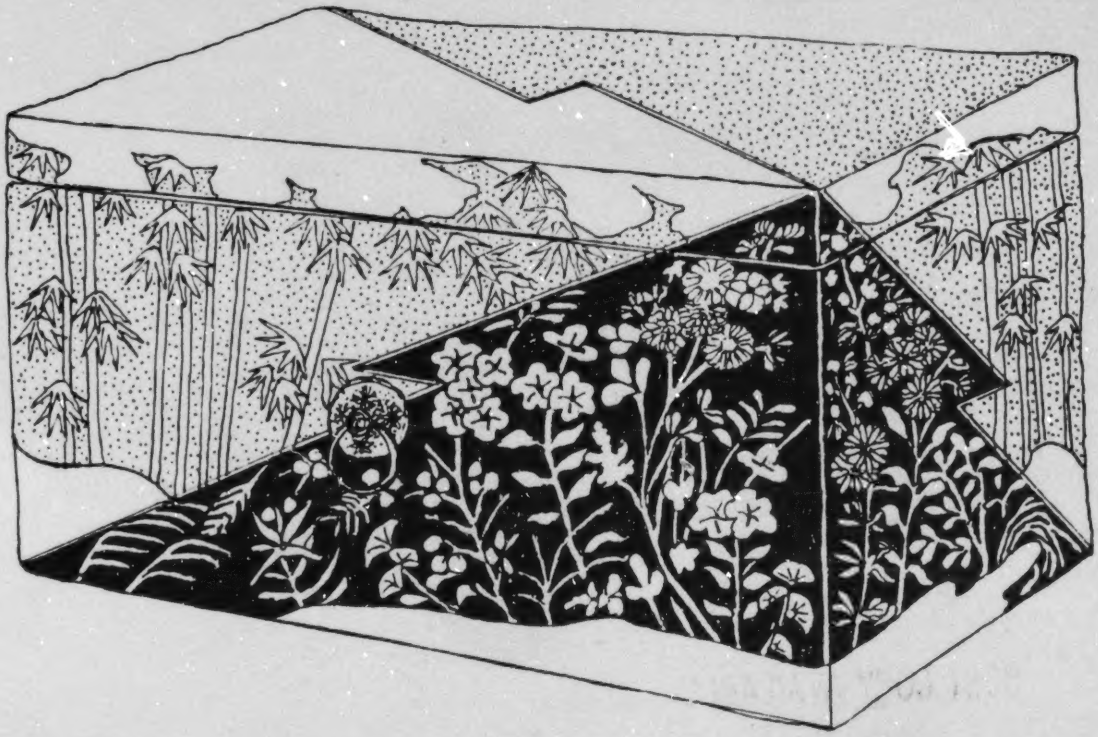
Momoyama Period (1568-1615)

This was a time of political disunity and social chaos. In design it was a period of reconstruction. Many traditional themes were in decline or had already collapsed and a reinterpretation of many classic motifs occurred.

- During the Momoyama period many castles and palaces were built, sliding doors and folding screens were lavishly ornamented. Landscapes or blooming flowers were favourite subjects, bringing familiar outdoor scenes to the interior of a room. Laquer furnishings were decorated with similar designs in order to create a harmonized interior.

The compositorial device of dividing the ornamented area into uneven sections separated by the zig-zag outline was used. Each adjoining section contained different patterns. This device was used on textiles, ceramics, and laquer ware. An example is a stationary box of the period. A bamboo grove with young shoots representing spring is dramatically juxtaposed with a pattern of autumn plants.

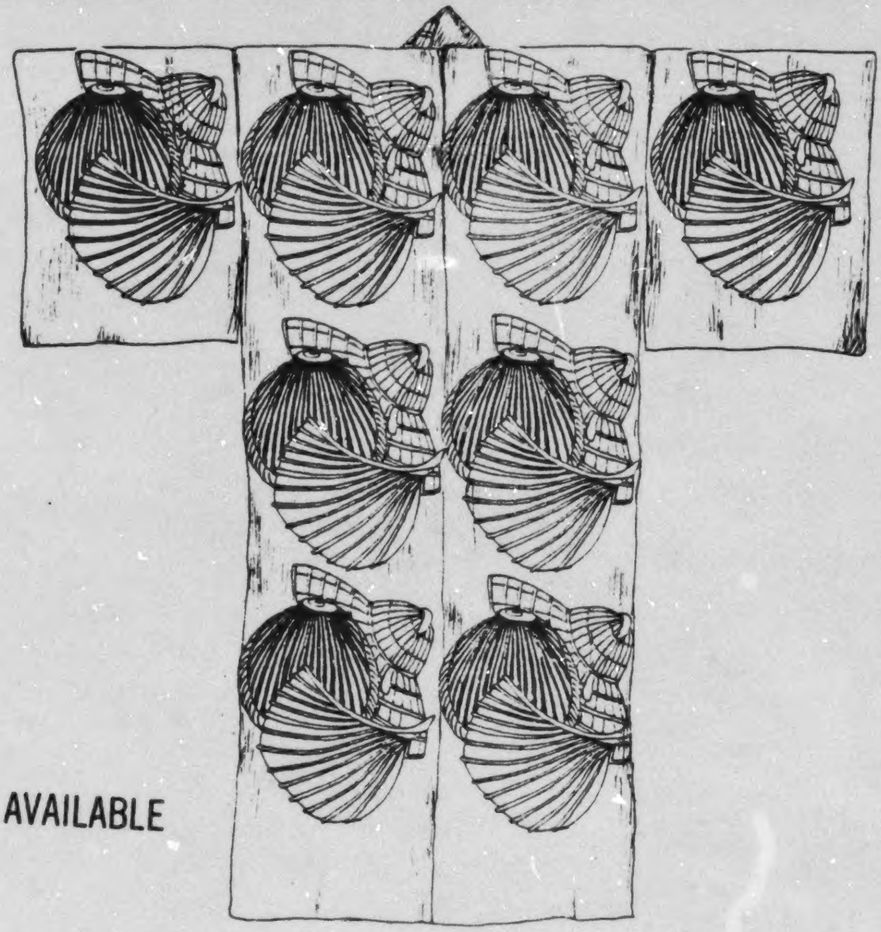
Another characteristic of Momoyama period design was the addition of crestlike medallions of stylized flowers to naturalistic floral scenes.



A momoyama laquered stationary box displaying the zig-zag division of the ornamented area.

Edo Period (1615-1868)

The newly established feudal government based in Edo (Tokyo) imposed a strict policy of national seclusion in order to keep the country at peace. A new class became dominant in Edo society, the merchant class. While Kyoto continued to be the nominal capital of the country, the Tokugawa shogunate ruled from Edo. Control of the economy had passed into the hands of the merchants and they became the new patrons of the arts. The development of local clan governments created regional industries. As a result the various rural societies created new motifs of a specificially regional flavour. Mingei or 'folk art' describes the arts and crafts which emerged directly out of the needs of rural commoners and were of use to them in their daily lives.



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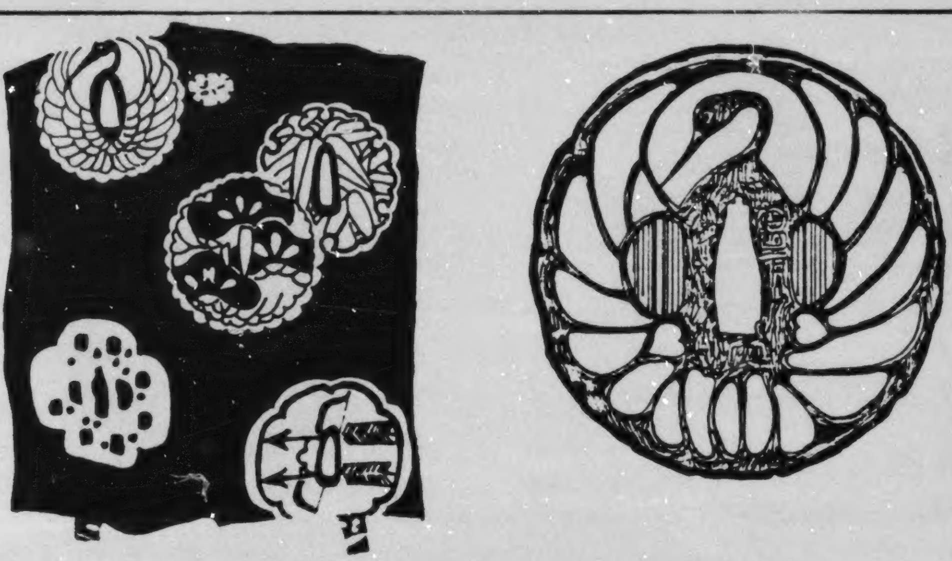
A stencil dyed kimono by Serizawa Keisuke using objects from daily life as decorative motifs. The design shows hats and fans from the island of Okinawa.

In addition individual artists developed unique motifs that had a strong influence on the decorative styles of the later Edo period artists. Korin, a painter, famous for his striking laquer designs, and Yuzen, a Kyoto painter, introduced styles that found expression in all the decorative arts, particularly textiles.

One object that was valued for its appearance as much as for its function was the *tsuba* or sword guard. This is the metal fitting on a sword that protects the wielder's hand, separating the blade from the part of the sword held by the hand.



A sword-guard and a *kimono* with sword-guard motifs.

In subject matter the *Edo* craftsmen turned more and more to motifs taken from their daily lives. Things such as vegetables, fish, paper umbrellas, and carpenter's tools appeared in designs. Similarly various occupations were incorporated into designs--rice planting and fishing. Motifs that had been developed in previous periods for religious and aristocratic purposes were adapted for popular use during the *Edo* period. Also decorative motifs drew on themes from classical literary works such as the twelfth century *Tale of Genji* as well as childrens' stories such as *Momotaro*, the peach-boy. Other motifs were based on annual festivals. The motifs that developed or were adapted in the *Edo* period continue to be used in present day Japan.

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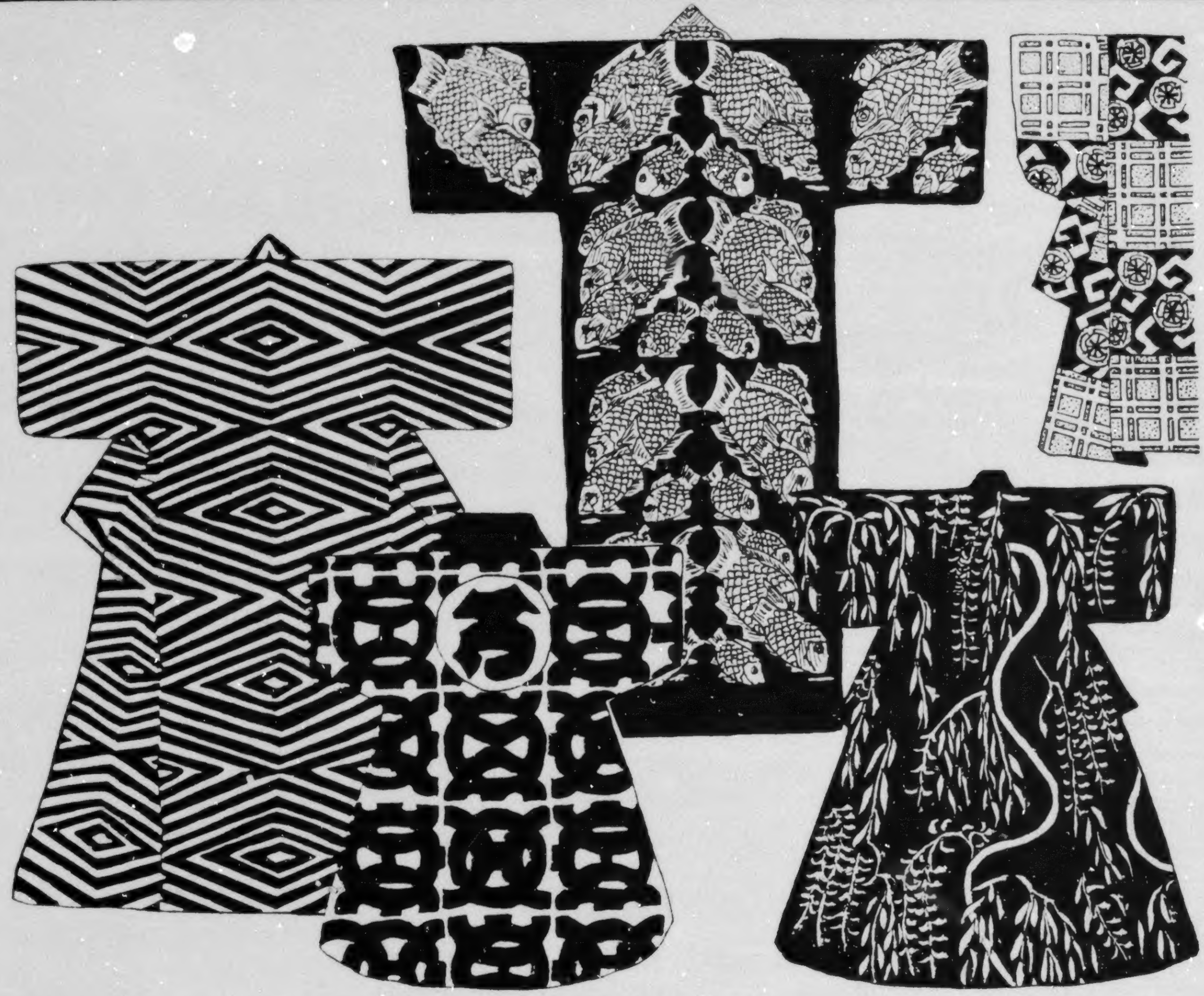
- Textile design is one area of the Japanese decorative arts in which both the traditional aspects of design and those aspects which mark the change of patron and market can be followed. To understand the value that was placed on the decoration of textiles for clothing it is important to consider theplace that the kimono had in Japanese life.

The kimono

Standardized in its form the kimono gains distinction and novelty from its decoration; a fine kimono was an adornment in the same way as jewels. The garment is angular in its art line and presents flat areas where the detail of patterns may be displayed. The word kimono (literally 'clothing') refers to the traditional wrap-around garment with rectangular sleeves worn by both men and women. It is made of vertical panels of cloth stitched together and is bound with an obi (a sash).

Generally kimonos are only worn now in Japan by a few people on formal occasions, although most people wear a casual kukata for relaxation and elderly people do wear kimonos regularly. However, a custom made kimono is an original work by a creative artist and such a garment is likely to be handed down from one generation to the next, like a painting or a piece of jewellery.

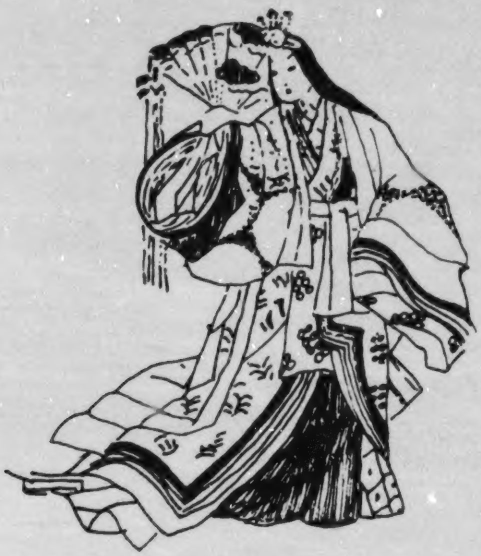
Traditionally, a bride was given a set of kimonos on her wedding day, which were meant to last a lifetime. But at the end of every ten years, the colours and deigns of the fabric would have to change because the older the wearer, the darker the colours and the smaller the pattern would have to be. The kimonos would be unpicked, bleached, re-dyed, and then re-sewn.



A ladies favourite kimono was donated at her death to a temple. The priests cut these kimonos into patches to make their robes. This was a continuation of an ancient custom. When clothing material was scarce it was a widespread practice to patch small pieces of fabric together to make clothes. Buddhist priests made their kesa (or surplice) out of cast-away rags or fragments of material donated by the faithful. (The kesa is still made out of several pieces of material symbolic of the original practice.) In addition it was the custom for a man who had reached the age of sixty to be presented with a kimono made up of different pieces of material each given by a friend with good wishes for health and long life. The design potentialities of the patchwork technique were utilized in several ways (e.g., each half of a kimono being a different colour or design, a kimono divided into square sections alternately filled with two different designs).

A kimono is made of straight strips of cloth about eighteen inches wide and loosely sewn together, so that it may be easily taken apart for cleaning or washing. The cotton yukata was often washed intact and hung on a bamboo pole run through the sleeves--a non-ironing process that anticipated modern drip-dry!

The kimono to some extent is a 'one size fits all' garment which developed to meet the requirements of the Japanese climate. The hot, humid summers required a loose fitting, comfortable garment. The kimono with its large sleeves and ample size is airy for summer and can be made fit for winter by adding layers.

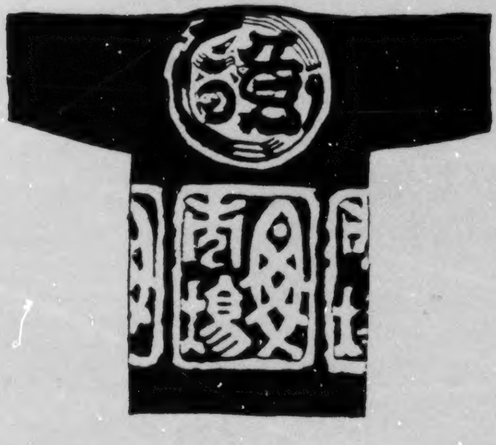


An example of the Juni-hitoe style.

This 'wrapping' phenomenon is a distinctive aspect of Japanese culture seen most dramatically during the Heian period when ladies of the court donned many layers of kimono for ceremonial occasions. Known as juni-hitoe the colour combinations of the layers were strictly regular and various combinations were given composite names. For instance, colours worn from February to March were known as 'shades of the plum blossom'.

The predecessor of the kimono is the kosode ('small sleeves') which was worn as an undergarment from the Nara period, and as the outer garment of every day apparel from the Muromachi period. Transfer of political power in the latter period from the nobility to the military samurai class who urged a life of simplicity and frugality was probably responsible for the popularity of the uncomplicated kosode.

But by the Momoyama period the kosode had become the object of elaborate textile designs, and was used by both men and women for extravagant display. This trend experienced a reversal when the Tokugawa shogunate came to power. In the Edo period every effort was made by the shogunate to stratify society and to perfect the feudal system as quickly as possible. The shogunate emphasized the necessity for people to behave in accordance with their class. Four main classes were distinguished: samurai, farmer, artisan, and merchant. The wearing of dress unsuited to one's class was punished. In the Edo period, the garment was used to convey a wide range of information about the wearer. It indicated the sex, age, marital status, class, rank, or occupation of the wearer as well as the season or an occasion of congratulations or condolence. Apart from slight variations in form, material, and technique, the differences were shown solely by the kinds and colours of the kosode pattern.

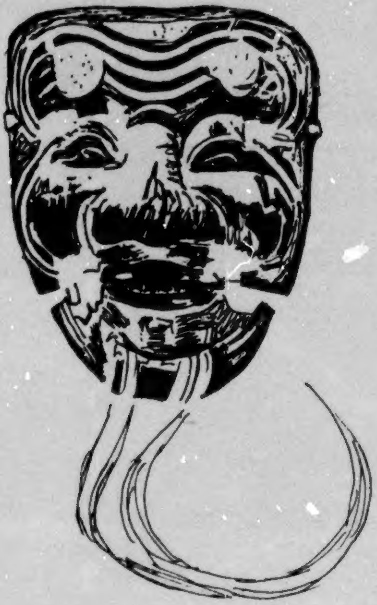


This tradesman's coat shows the characters for "fish market" and a design of a fish.

However, even in this repressive age there were some situations in which a limited freedom remained. These were the licensed quarters and the theatre. These two environments became the centre of fashion, with courtesans and actors responsible for introducing new designs. The kosode represents a popularization of the outstandingly extravagant Noh costumes, nurtured under the patronage of the aristocracy.

- Noh Theatre

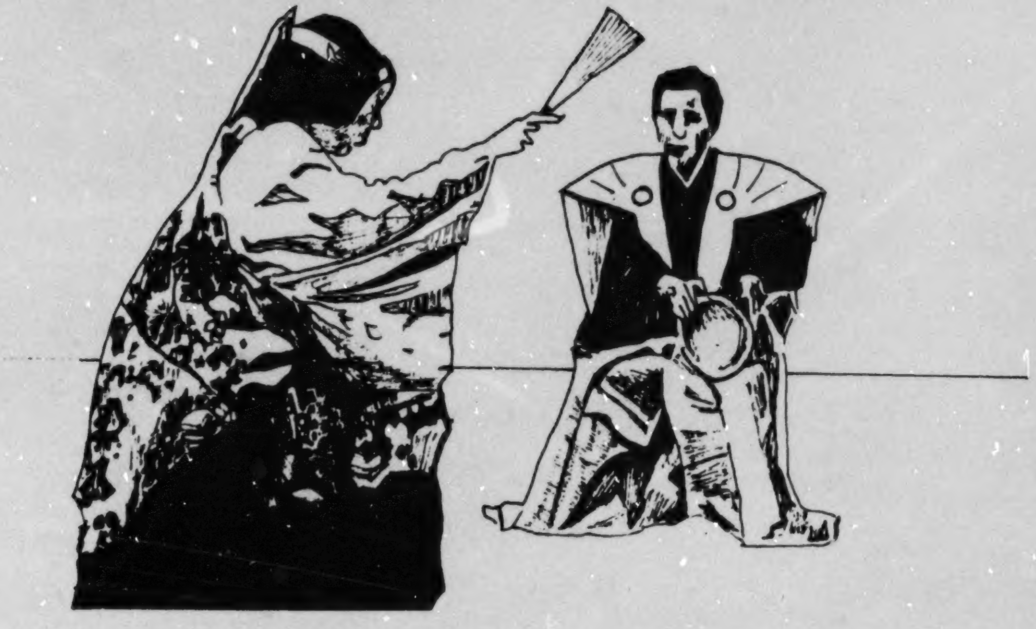
Noh drama is a stylized, ritualistic, and operatic theatre art which makes use of masks, dancing, a chorus, and an orchestra. The origins of Noh are found in the early rituals of Shinto and Buddhism in which song and dance played a part. A survival on the Noh stage from these rituals is the celebratory playlet Okina, which is performed on auspicious occasions. The 'old man' mask used in this plotless song-and-dance sequence is said to have existed as early as the tenth century.



The Okina mask.

The Noh theatre developed when the Emperor Yoshimitsu gave patronage to the playwright Kan'ami Kiyotsugu (1333-1384AD) and his son Zeami Motokiyo (1363-1443AD). In Noh plays the movement keeps to a very slow tempo. The chanting is surpressed as if groaning, and the modd is meditative and reflective.

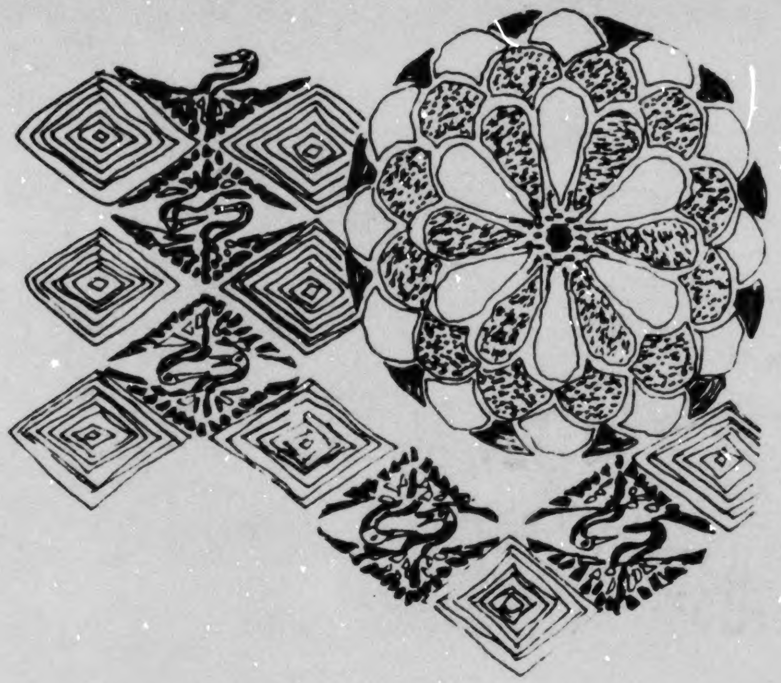
The plays quickly became a favourite court amusement. There was a custom at the time of rewarding a retainer by taking off an item of clothing and presenting it to him. It is thought that this is how such luxurious costumes first came to be used for Noh performances. The angularity of the garment was emphasized by using stiff brocades or several layers of highly decorative costumes. The Noh drama is dependent for its effect on an infinite suggestiveness in sound, movement, and costume.



A scene from a Noh play.

The earliest Japanese textile patterns were created by a skillful manipulation of natural dye colours. From the simplest plain weave construction an irridescent effect was achieved by using different colours in the warp and weft. Until the Asuka period colour manipulation continued to be the primary means of decoration.

As well as many intricately patterned woven textiles produced in Japan numerous striking designs have been created by innovative dyeing techniques. Due largely to technical necessity woven patterns tend to be geometrical. In order to decorate fabrics with more complex pictorial designs the technique of double layer weaves (Kara-ori) was perfected, allowing weavers to produce patterns of birds and flowers. Because areas of coloured threads remained loose on the textile surface this weaving technique gave the effect of embroidery. Indeed embroidery was often used in conjunction with woven or dyed designs to add contrasts of texture in patterns. Showing something of the flexibility of painting it brought a feeling of depth to what would otherwise be flat areas of colour. Embroidery remained popular even when weaving and dyeing techniques became more sophisticated.



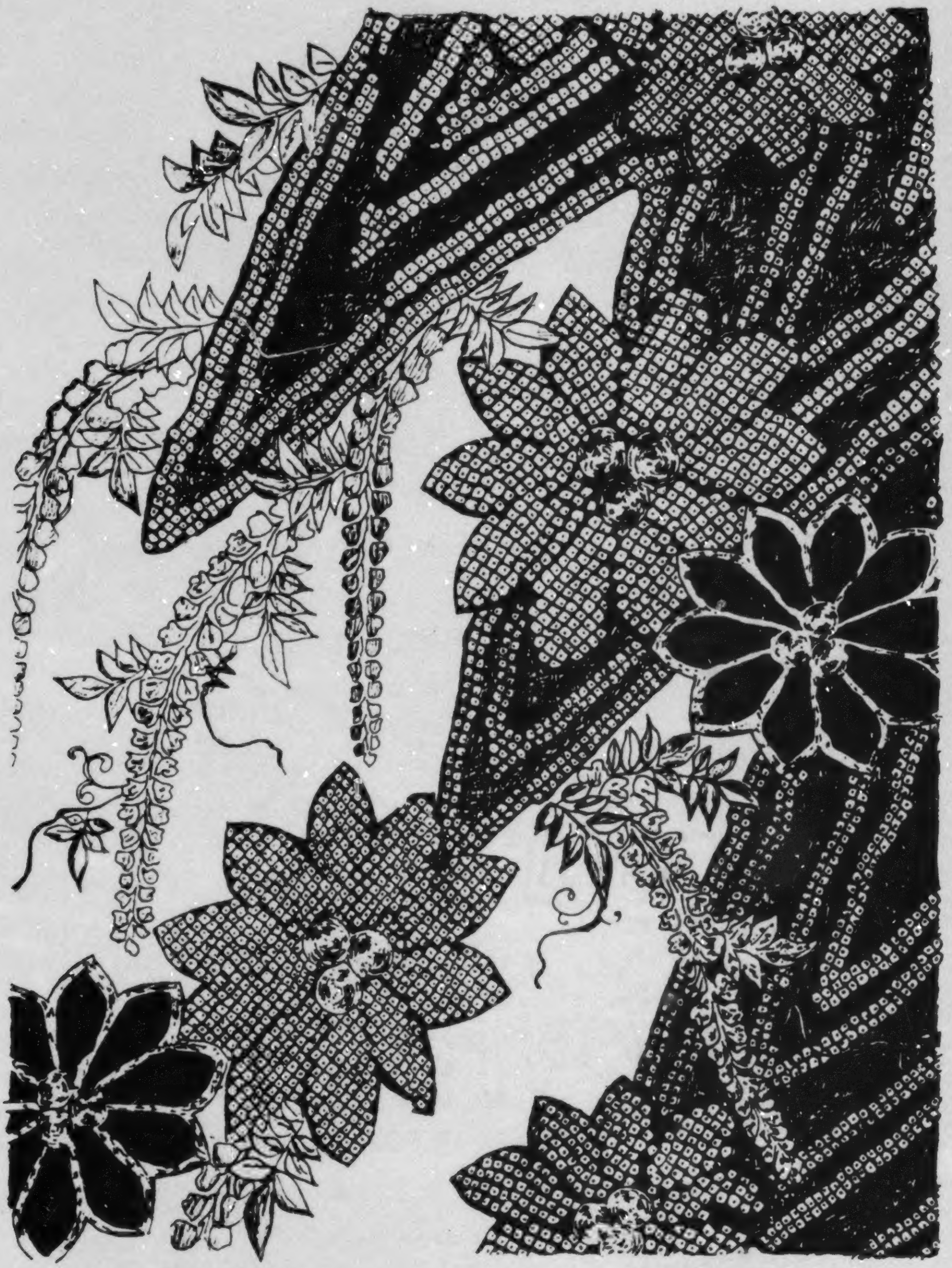
An example of the Kara-ori weave using crane and chrysanthemum motifs.

Dyed Designs

Developments in dyed designs were spurred on during the Onin wars (1467-1477) when most of the weavers fled Kyoto. The city was burned down and the old weaving district was completely destroyed. Out of necessity designs were executed in a variety of non-loom techniques that required few tools beyond needle, thread, brush, ink, and dyepot. The mid-fifteenth century saw the emergence of the Kosode, formerly an undergarment, as a dress appropriate even for the most elegant occasions. Its distinctive form was to foster the development of free-style graphic designs that used the whole robe almost as a canvas. Value was placed on both the visual splendour of the designs and the use of certain techniques; great value was attatched to designs that had required an intricate or time consuming process to achieve their effect.

During the Edo period, developments in textile crafts were shaped by a long series of edicts designs not only to encourage frugality on all levels of society, but to make visible the distinctions between the samurai and the lower orders of farmer, artisan, and merchant.

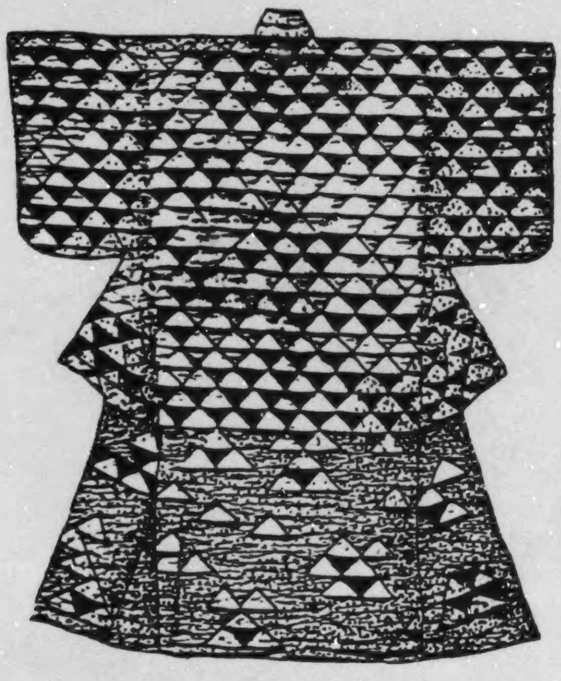
- For example, Kanoko (a spot pattern produced by tie-dyeing) had been favoured as an overall pattern or as an accent since the Nara period, but in the Edo period the use of Kanoko for the kimonos of the towsnpeople was prohibited by an edict pronouncing tie-dyeing an extravagant process. However, the demand for Kanoko by merchants was satisfied by clever dyers who produced fabrics that were stencilled, not tie-dyed, to imitate the spots of the forbidden process.



Katazome (stencil dyeing) was a technique that developed directly out of the various natural substances available on the islands. Tough hand-made paper from the bark of the native mulberry trees provided the stencils which were strengthened with persimmon-tannin, the designs were then reserved on cloth with a rice paste resist made from mochi-rice (a glutinous species of rice).

Kirihame includes both patchwork and applique. The purpose of *kirihame* is to achieve a complex effect by combining several simple designs. In the manner of inlay in woodwork or metalwork different fabrics would be combined to form one unified design.

Surihaku (impressed foil): Popular from the *Kamakura* to the *Momoyama* period these designs were executed by applying sheets of gold or silver leaf to a cloth. A stencil of the desired design is placed on the cloth and paste is applied to this, after which the stencil is removed. Gold or silver leaf is placed over the paste and left to dry. The cloth is usually red, purple, or indigo. The process gave a striking shimmering effect to the fabric.



The uroko pattern lent itself particularly well to this technique. The scalelike triangle motifs of this pattern are suggestive of the scales (uroko) of a serpent. Costumes with this design are typically used for female demon roles in Noh plays.

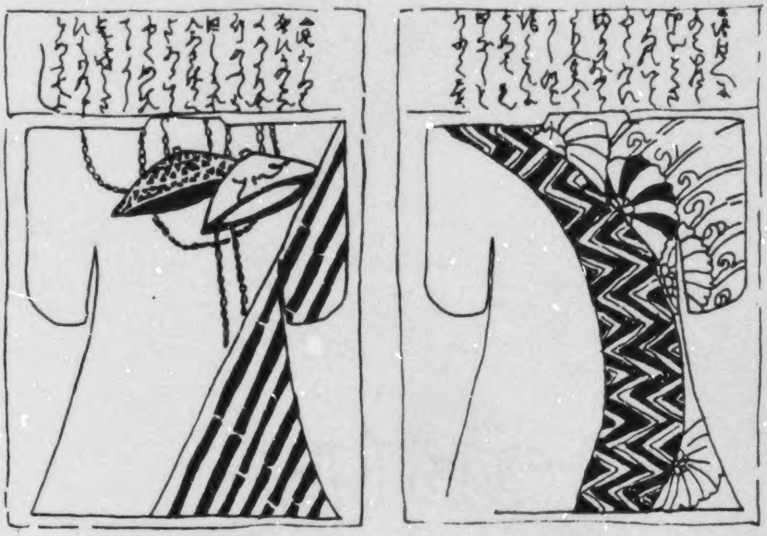
Rag weaving and Kasuri

Edo kimonos made for everyday use,particularly for work in the rural areas,displayed a rugged vitality. Stitching was generally worked into geometric designs incorporating the seams as a feature of the pattern. Rag weaving was another way of maximizing the natural textural properties of process in a design. Narrow strips of old cloth were torn,sorted by colour(shades of blue stitched end to end and woven into heavy warm work jackets.

Kasuri weaving begins with dyeing the thread to be woven. Bundles of thread are bound so that certain sections of the bundle take the dye and others do not.A little dye invariably penetrates the reserved area causing irregular bleeding,This fading and merging of the dyed and undyed areas is one of the unique properties of Kasuri.

Kimono Design Books

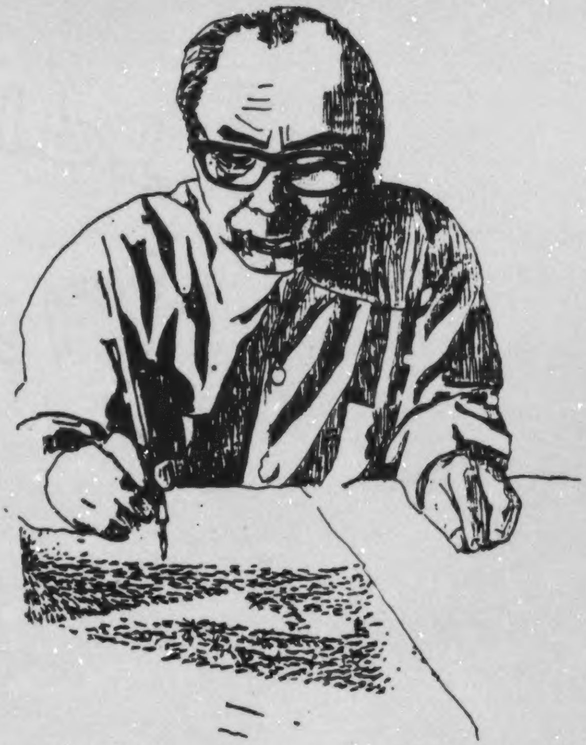
These books probably originated in the Momoyama period when there was a demand for extravagant clothes. Dyers and fabric merchants made up collections of their latest designs in book form and customers made their choice from these.



A page from the oldest surviving book of kimono designs, Shinsen On-Hiinagata published in the mid-1660's.

Yuzen

Yuzen is a starch resist technique, the invention of which is attributed to Miyazaki Yuzen, afamous painter in the Genroku era(1688-1704) of the Edo period. Up until then powerfully expressive geometric designs created by direct dyeing and tie-dyeing methods lacked freedom and subtley in composition and colour. Yuzen's technique started a revolution in the dyeingoof free-style designs.



A dyer at work on a custom-made kimono.

Japanese Crests

The hereditary crests of Japan, called monshō, embody many of the basic elements of Japanese design which have been mentioned so far. Many of the motifs found in kimonos, are found in crests, where they are reduced to their essential components.

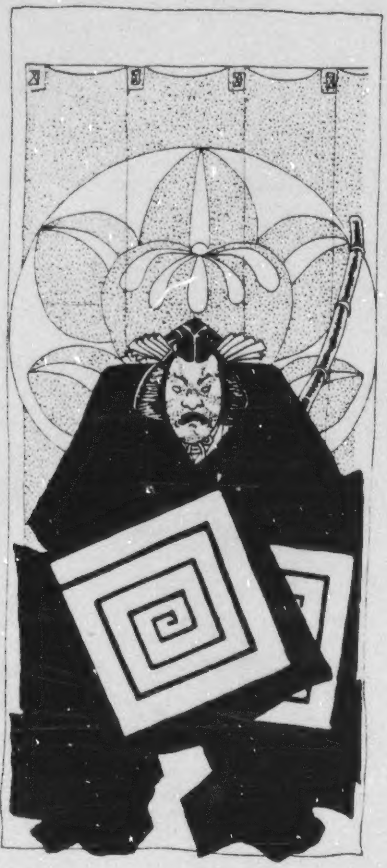
Crests carried the insignia of a particular family, and they were used to mark kimonos, household utensils, lanterns. Although in present-day Japan the significance of crests do not appear to be so strong, they are still used by commercial organizations and large businesses to identify their products. An example of this is the trademark of Japan Air Lines (JAL).

In the Heian Period crests were used by the aristocracy to mark the belongings of each household. But in the case of military families crests were used to distinguish friend from foe. They became a means of representing family unity, and so had to be clearly recognizable and simple.

During the Japanese civil wars in the Kamakura and Muromachi periods, conflicting allegences splintered households, and variations of crests then developed. This meant the number of motifs increased, and these became more stylized and simplified.

In the Edo period it was customary to display three or five crests in particular areas of the formal kimono, and they became even more stylized and symmetrical. At this time nearly all crests were composed in a medalion format.

During this time of extended peace the original need for identification on the battlefield disappeared, and crests then became more symbols of status: used in vehicles and clothing they were a means of identifying rank and order.



Actors' crests were displayed outside the theatres in which they were appearing.

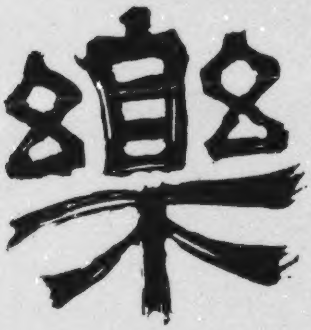
- In Japan, calligraphy has a two-fold significance: 1. it is considered to be a fine art, akin to poetry and painting, and 2. it is thought to give superior moral character to those that master it.

Throughout the history of Japan all men of letters were accomplished calligraphers, and most sons of warrior were regularly trained in the art. Even today, in Japanese schools calligraphy is still thought of as an important branch of learning and is called shodo.

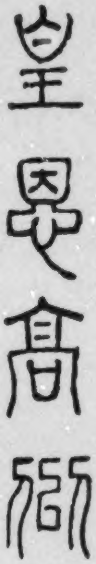
Japanese calligraphy began to be adapted from Chinese writing around the fifth century AD. At first the Japanese wrote only in Chinese characters (kanji , but soon began to develop new characters of their own called kana. The use of kana began by simply borrowing characters from Chinese for their sound value, irrespective of their real meanings. These were put together to imitate the sound patterns of the Japanese spoken language. However, texts constructed in this way soon became cumbersome and characters were abbreviated and run together to form another kind of kana known as hiragana. A third type of kana is katakana, which is a distinctly angular script. Katakana are used to write foreign loan words, and hiragana are used to show the grammatical functions of words in sentences.

The Japanese script is written downwards in vertical lines, starting in the upper right hand corner and moving left. There are five distinct styles of Japanese calligraphy: Tensho: This is the most archaic script and originated for use on seals. It is bold and diagrammatic in effect, having derived from an incised line. Reisho: Sometimes known as 'scribe's script', this is a very regular and balanced form of writing . Kaisho: Block script, the characters of which are shaped to fit into an imaginary square. It is the style used for nearly all printed matter in Japan today. Gyosho: Running style script, created by a fast movement of a brush. Sosho: Grass script, in which characters are written in a fluid and curvilinear manner.

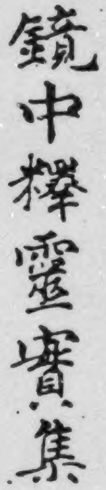
At least two sorts of brushes are used: 1. Futofude: thick brushes generally used for the main body of writing; and 2. Hosofude: smaller brushes used for finer calligraphic work (e.g., inscriptions).



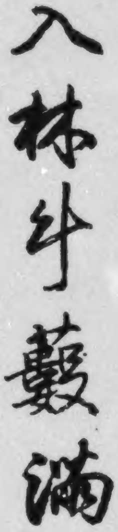
Reisho



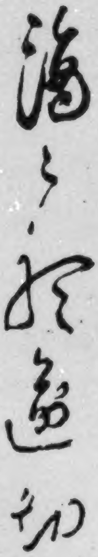
Tensho



Kaisho



Gysho



Sosho

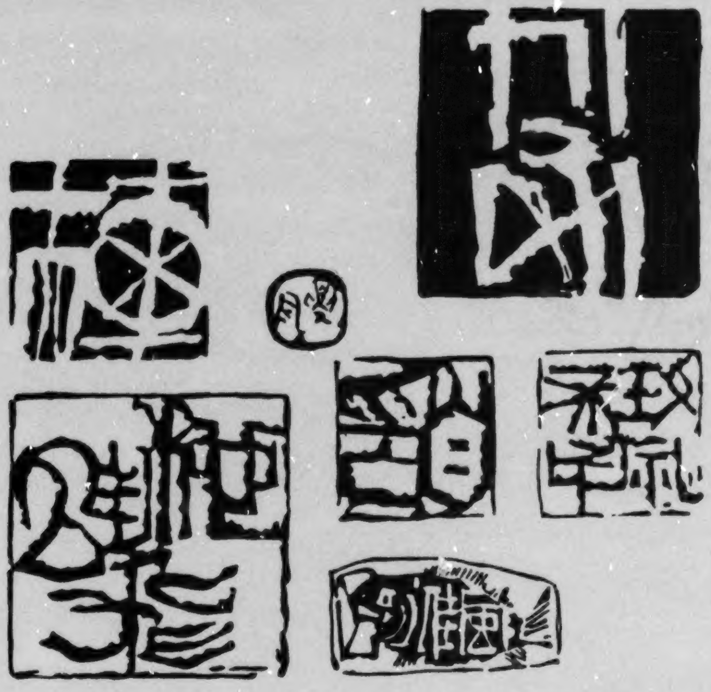
Chinese ink (sumi) is usually made from soot and oil mixed with hide or fishbone glue and dried into a stick. To make ink, the calligrapher rubs the ink stick onto a suzuri, a special inkstone containing a small pool of water.

In the modern era calligraphy as an art continues to thrive. It is represented, along with painting and sculpture. at annual government-sponsored exhibitions.

● Important though the written script is in Japan seals are used as principal means of identification.

The use of seals in Japan became especially widespread during the seventeenth century. But they were legalized as early as 710 AD, when they were manufactured solely by the government for use on official documents. About the middle of the eighth century, nobles who served the Emperor were allowed personal seals, and in 767 AD, seals were given to the twelve main Buddhist temples of Nara, the capital.

Every Japanese is supposed to have two seals: 1. an everyday seal, used on receipts, and 2. an officially registered seal, used for signing important documents. The written signature is not legally valid in Japan.



A selection of hand-carved seal faces.

A Japanese seal is carved from wood or ivory, and is approximately 1.5 cm in width. The face is either square or circular, and it is carried in a small case with an ink pad. Based on Chinese tradition, the seal imprint is always made with red ink.

Seals can be bought at ordinary shops, which keep a supply engraved with all the most common Japanese names.

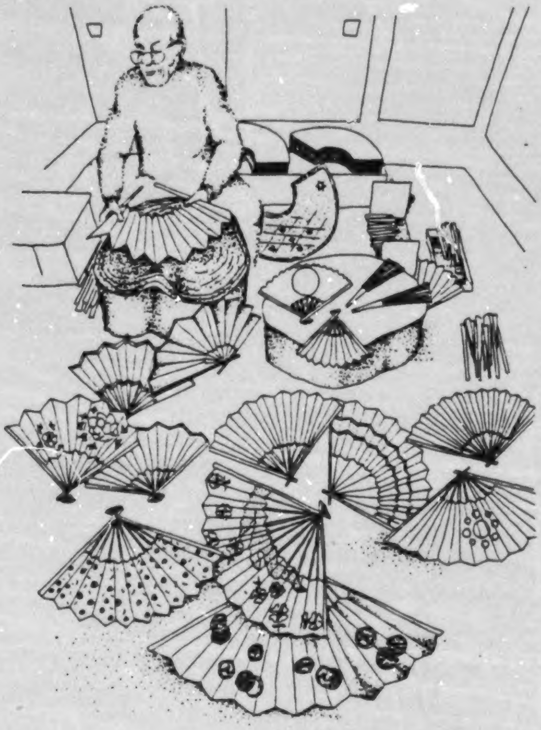
- A painting, a poem--
  how paper reveals a man's soul!

In Japan paper is used in every aspect of daily life. It is used as much by the architect as by the calligrapher. Chinese papers were first introduced to Japan in the sixth century AD by Korean Buddhist monks. During the Asuka period Crown Prince Shotoku encouraged the cultivation of mulberry trees and hemp plants for the nation-wide practice of the craft of paper-making. By the Heian period each region of the country came to be known for its own special types of paper. There was a great demand for paper from the nobility, government, and Buddhist clergy inspired by the flowering of literary persuits and the increase and growth of Buddhism, which encouraged sutra copying as a path to salvation.

When paper was first used in Japan it was highly valued: for example letter writers would use one sheet of paper over and over. As the techniques of paper-making became more widely known many farmers made paper as a winter activity. Paper became the poor man's substance, but it was loved by the rich for it symbolized a life of simplicity, humility, and harmony for which they longed.

Made from trees growing wild, paper is man's recreation of nature. By concentrating on the basic fibre and treating it without adulterations Japan has produced papers of exceptional strength.

This man is making sensu, or paper fans. They come in many colours and shapes with bold designs on them.

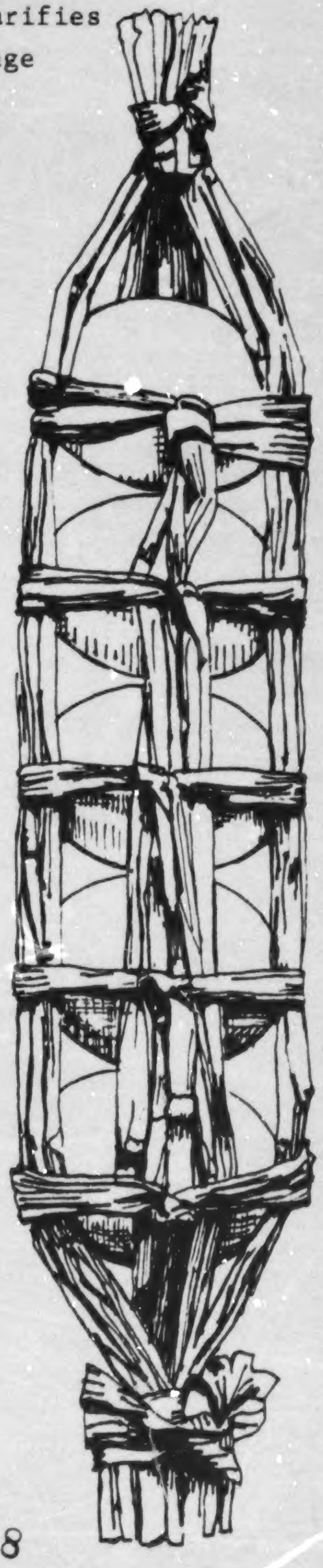


The Japanese have found many imaginative uses for paper: for instance, folding paper lanterns, paper fans, oiled paper umbrellas, and kites. Paper is also woven either to make clothes or to make objects such as hats, cups, and boxes when it has been laquered.

Paper is considered to play a central role in everyday life of the Japanese, folded and cut as streamers and hung from ropes it consecrates all places: for instance shrines and venerable trees and rocks. Paper shoji screens must be repapered or mended each year, cakes are served on paper (as in the tea-ceremony) and gifts must be wrapped in paper.

PACKAGING

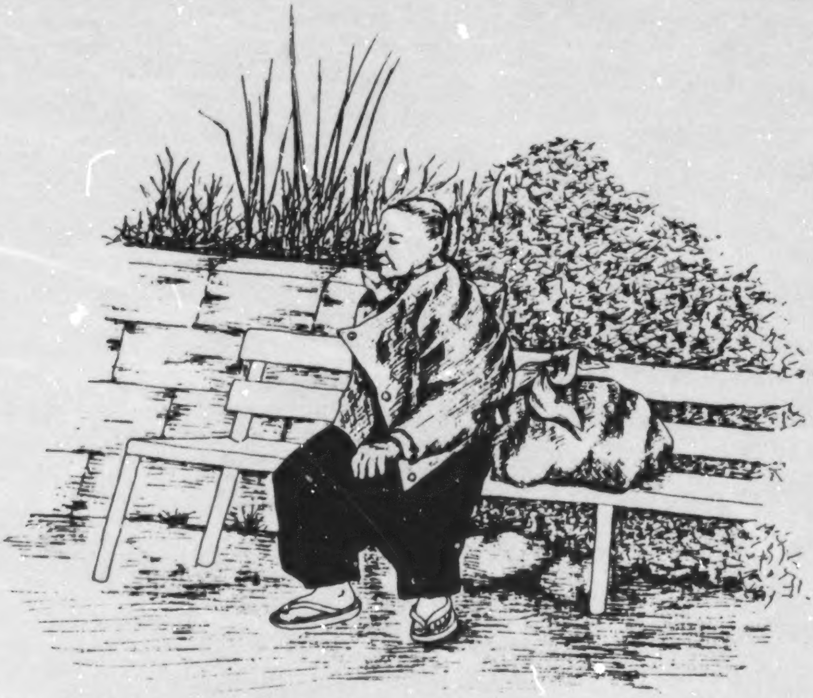
- Rituals of wrapping are very important in Japan. They are informed by three considerations: 1. an aesthetic philosophy that believed everything should be made beautiful, 2. a system in which all objects large or small, expensive or cheap, were valued, and 3. the ancient concept of cleanliness and uncleanliness; packaging purifies and distinguishes the contents of the package from all similar objects.



Wrappings were developed from the natural world: in rural areas a given object was simply wrapped in whatever material lay at hand. The outcome was adequate for storing and transporting the object and both functional and simple in execution. Bamboo leaves to hold rice dumplings, and knotted straw to carry eggs.

These materials were further developed by craftsmen who produced intricate and luxurious packing--compact laquer boxes, extravagantly patterned fukusa (woven or embroidered cloths used to cover boxes containing ceremonial gifts), and dyed furoshiki (square cloths tied horizontally by the corners and used to carry things around).

It is still the custom to wrap everything on every occasion: even money is wrapped before it is presented. Next to computerized cash dispensers in banks there is always a pile of decorated envelopes in which cash can be wrapped. The smallest furoshiki is 32 cm square, and is used for presenting money on formal occasions. Inside the cloth there is a rectangular board, laquered red for festive occasions and black for funeral offerings. Large deep red cotton furoshikis decorated with symbols of longevity are used for wrapping wedding gifts.



The elderly woman rests. Her large furoshiki is beside her. The furoshiki is still used in Japan today.

The choice of exactly the right gift for the right occasion and person is governed by a complex system of quette. Gifts must be given before New Year and at the start of summer, and all must be wrapped. They must never be unwrapped in front of the giver, or any mention made of the gift thereafter.

TEA CEREMONY

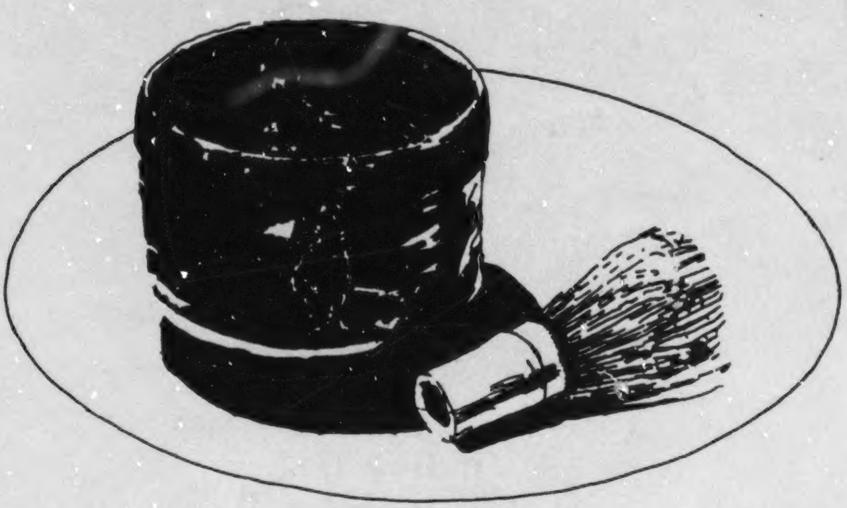
- Two occupations, both now unique elements of Japanese cultural life, developed at virtually the same time in the Chinese influenced Muromachi period. The tea ceremony and the art of the garden both have their origins in the concepts of Zen Buddhism which stress the idea of contemplation as a way of achieving inner peace.

Originally the tea ceremony was confined virtually to Buddhist monks, who brought the practice of drinking powdered tea from China during that country's Sui and T'ang dynasties (600-894AD). At first, the beverage was regarded more as a medicine than as a refreshing drink.

It was not until the mid-fifteenth century that the tea ceremony itself had its real beginnings, when the priest Murata Shuko devised rules for his own pleasure in tea drinking. Formerly there had been a popular tea tasting contest enjoyed by courtiers, called to-cha. Murata, however, incorporated in his rules the tranquility and calm inherent in Zen Buddhism. One of his precepts was that the tea ceremony was to be prepared and enjoyed in a small, bare room only four and a half mats in area. In addition, he stipulated that the mind of the participant should be as calm and clear as that of a Zen monk.

Sen Rikyu completed formalizing the rules for procedure in the Zen art of cha-no-yu. Rikyu became tea master to Hideyoshi, the sixteenth century military ruler; and, following the principles of Zen, he insisted that the art should cultivate the four basic virtues: harmony, respect, purity and tranquility.

Harmony refers to the mutual harmony of the guests, which is why the tea master carefully selects those who will participate in the rituals. Harmony also has reference here to the subtle sounds associated with the tea ceremony--the sound of trickling water, the gentle sighing of the wind through the trees in the garden outside the tea room, the simmering of the hot water. Harmony is also to be found in the sense of simplicity engendered by the plain implements of tea, and even in the touch of the ceramics used.



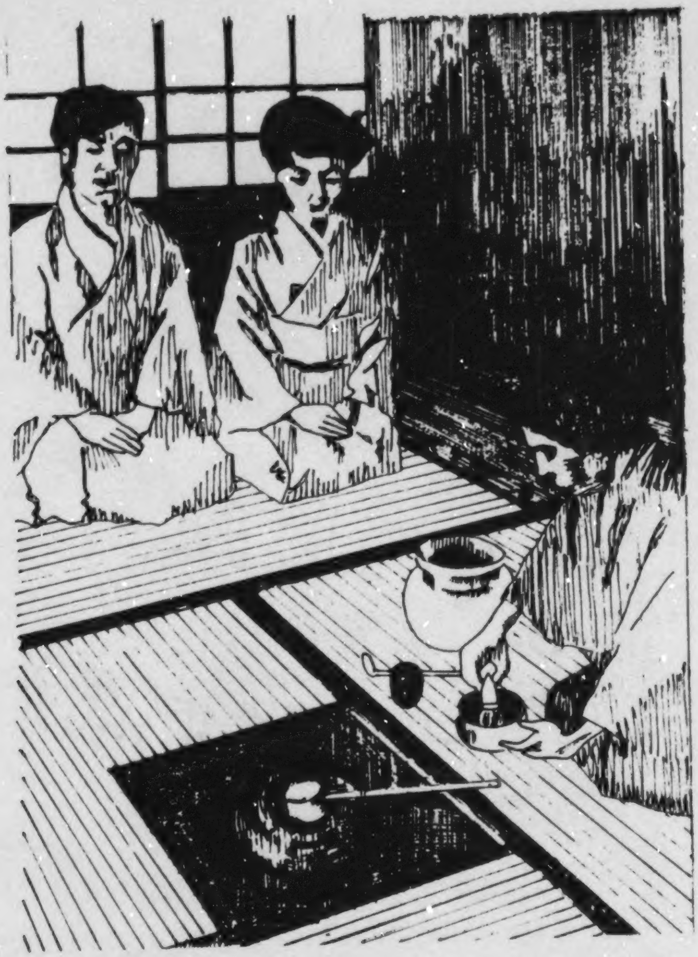
The whisk and the tea bowl are two implements of the tea ceremony. Tea bowls are highly prized for their simplicity.

Respect lies between the guests and the host in accordance with the fundamental premise that all are equal in the tea room. There is also an implicit respect for the ceremony itself, as well as for the creator of the kakemono, the hanging scroll, and of the ikebana, the flower arrangement.

Purity refers to the quality of the minds of those present. Man is, in the tea room, ideally one with nature.

Tranquility refers to the atmosphere of the tea-ceremony, which aims at removing all barriers that stand between a meeting of minds with one another, and together, with nature and the universe.

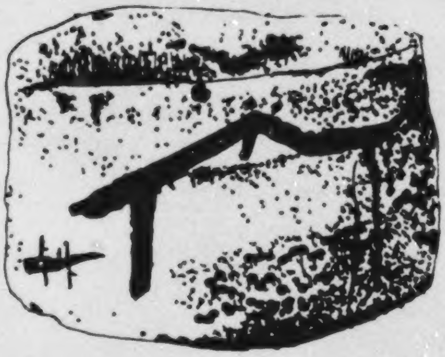
Before the ceremony begins the host sets the water receptacle and the tea caddy in position. Otherwise, the room is bare, except for the seasonal flower arrangement, the hanging scroll and possibly a simple ornament in the tokonoma, the alcove. The bronze, charcoal-fired stove is called a furo, and the iron kettle simmering on top is the furogama. At this time a cake plate or kashibachi, is placed in front of the principal guest.



The tea master makes the frothy green tea with a traditional wooden whisk.

Once the tea is prepared, the host places the bowl before the most honoured guest. With a deep bow to the other guests, the first served holds the bowl and takes a sip. He then compliments the host on the flavour of the tea, and sips at least twice more before passing the bowl onto the next guest. The bowl is thus passed around before it comes back to the host. As each guest finishes sipping, he carefully wipes the rim where it has been touched by his mouth, with a piece of paper called kaishi. At the conclusion of the ceremony, the implements used are passed around, and are admired, each in their turn.

When you hear the splash
Of the water drops that fall
Into the stone bowl
You will feel that all the dust
Of your mind is washed away
Sen Rikyu

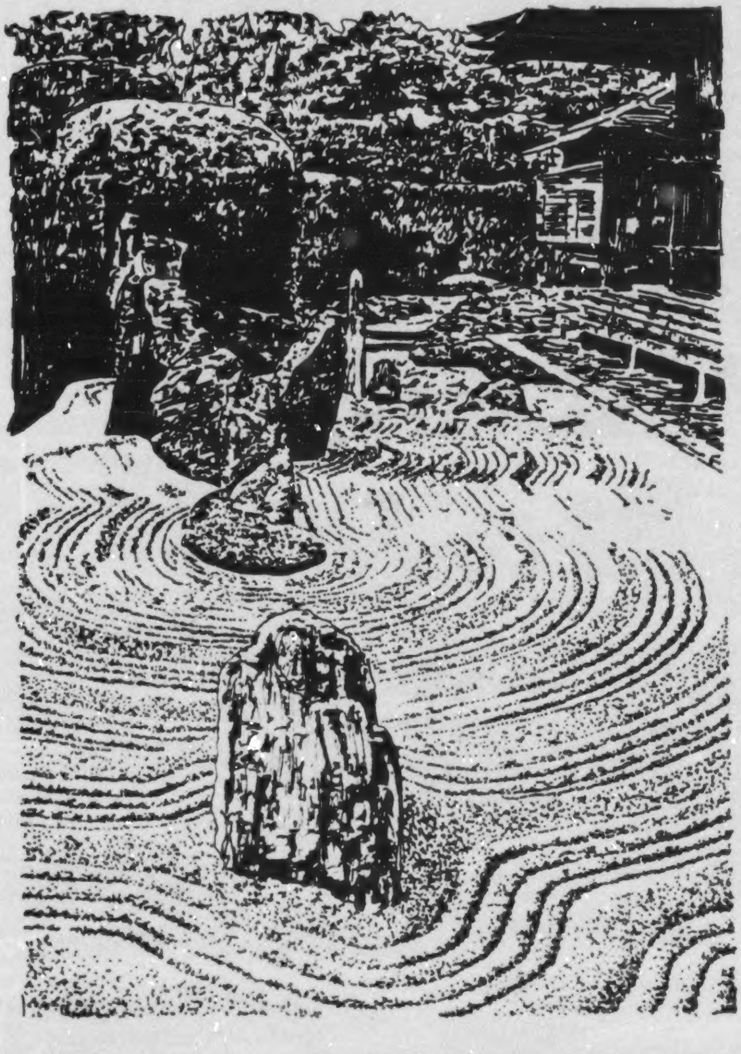


Hand in hand with the development of the tea ceremony and the tea room, there went the development of the garden as an allied art form.

- The approach to a tea house was through a tea garden (roji niwa), the ideal of which Rikyu sought in the desolate tranquility of a mountain trail. Among the contributions of the tea garden to the contemporary Japanese garden are stepping stones, stone lanterns, groves of trees, as well as stone wash basins for guests being served tea.

There are four traditional styles of Japanese gardens. The funa asobi (pleasure boat) style: this centred on an oval shaped pond, where courtiers went boating, and was a popular type of garden in the Heian period. The shuyu (stroll) style: a garden whose chief feature is a park leading from vantage point to vantage point from which changing scenes could be viewed. The kansho (contemplation) style: the garden is viewed from within a central structure, the emphasis being placed on the creation of a carefully composed scene suggestive of a picture and suitable for long and studied viewing. The kaiyu (many pleasure) style: the garden was constructed around a central pond displaying striking changes of scene to the viewers.

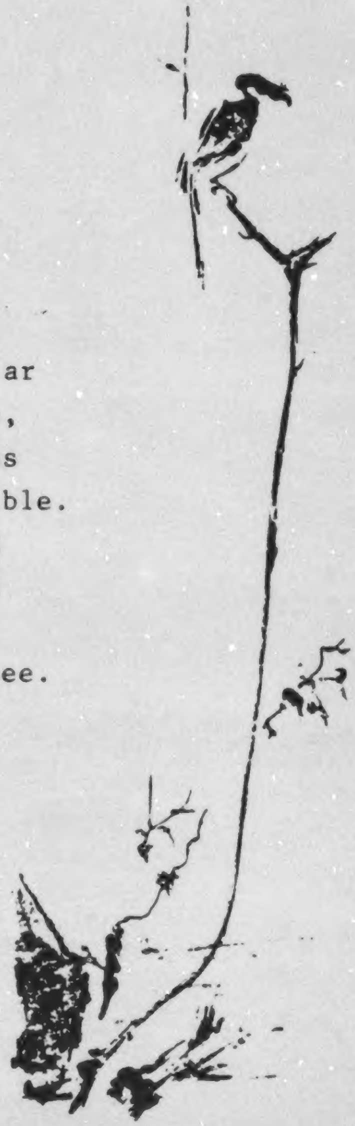
There are three basic principles of scene composition: reduced scale, symbolization, and borrowed view. Reduction in scale refers particularly to the kaiyu style garden, which brings together in a confined area adaptations of famous scenes and places of historical interest through miniaturization of natural views of mountains and rivers. Methods of symbolization are abstraction, as in the use of white sand to suggest the ocean, and inference, as in a grouping of stones or an island signifying the crane and tortoise. The term borrowed view describes the use of background views outside and beyond the garden, such as a beautiful mountain, a broad plain, or the sea. These are used in such a way that they become part of the interior scenic composition.



Some gardens represent miniature versions of the Japanese landscape, the raked sand being the sea and the rocks the mountains. Gardens such as this inspired a contemplative attitude.

SIMPLIFICATION AND ABSTRACTION

- Japanese images look informal, clear and simple and although the image is often stripped to only its essential elements this abstraction is the result of close observation. The simplicity is deceptive because Japanese images are made to carry the maximum information using the minimum means.



Shrike on a tree stump shows a particular bird caught at a specific point in time, as if a snapshot had been taken. It has been painted with as few marks as possible. But because the artist has concentrated upon the essential form of the bird and the basic structure of the tree the painting could represent any bird or tree.

Exercises in simplification and Abstraction.

All of the exercises require suitable still life objects or plants for the class to draw from.

1. Restrict the time given for a pupil to finish his drawings, e.g. 3-5 minutes per drawing.

2. Restrict the means, e.g. place large sheets of paper onto an easel or floor, tie large brush to the end of a stick.

3. Limit the number of marks the pupil is allowed to make, e.g. 5-6 per drawing.

4. Let the class study an object for a few minutes then remove it, and make them draw it from memory.

5. Let the pupil feel an outline on the object with his finger and draw what he feels.

6. Draw the silhouette of an object, but select the most characteristic outline.

7. Draw the negative spaces created by the object in the space it immediately occupies.

8. Make an illusionistic drawing of an object, then reduce it to pure line or pure tone in another drawing.

Teachers' Notes

The above exercises have been devised to train the pupils perceptual skills, to develop the ability to abstract the significant features of a given object and to represent it with the minimum of marks.

Compare Japanese methods of simplification with the economy of means used in 20th century graphic design, e.g. posters. How influential do you think the introduction of Japanese artistic values has been on modern design in the Western world?

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HAIKU POEMS

- A Haiku is a Japanese poem consisting of seventeen syllables in three lines of five, seven and five syllables.

Usually some reference to the season is made,not directly but symbolically,eg. maple leaves are an indication of autumn, plum blossoms are an indication of spring.

Petals of the plum
Fallen in the puddles
A garden scene.

Haiku are often informed by the Shinto belief in the power of kami (anything that can inspire a feeling of awe,reverence or mystery) eg. the sea is a kami, it is a mighty being, life-giver,food source and purifier.

These Pacific waves-
Touching how many countries
and the child's feet.

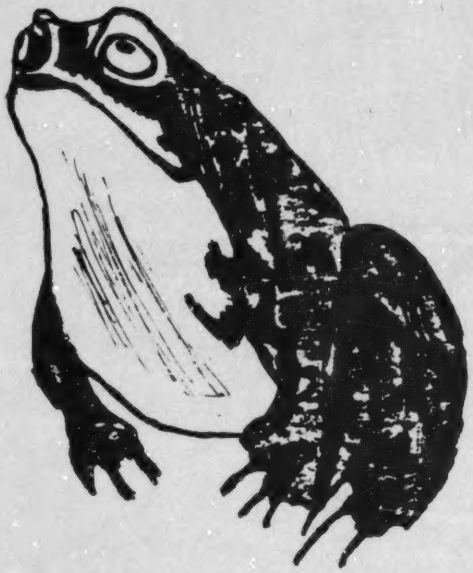
In the following Haiku the tombstones are treated as"living" but their movements are too slow for us to notice.

Two leaning tombstones
took seventy years to touch-
mist and peace dwell here.

The poems are free of rhythm or rhyme. They are non-explanatory or vague, this leaves them open to different interpretations. Haiku are divided into two sections which are independent of each other but at the same time related. This cutting is usually done by punctuation,a colon or a long dash.

- Make a Haiku either from the passage below or from the illustration. Choose what seem to you to be the most essential details and make a Haiku poem from them. In a language other than Japanese it is difficult to make the precise number of syllables fit, so you need not be too exacting. Your Haiku should not describe the scene, but rather suggest it.

The November day was overcast. A quick autumn shower swept by. The young woman wore an azure kimono dappled with maple leaves,some pale red, some deep red. The three-mat room was dusky even in the day-time and the kimono seemed to give off its own beautiful light.
As she reached to take the lid off the kettle, falling leaves rustled against the roof, and it was as though one or two of them had come inside to make the pattern on her sleeve and shoulder.



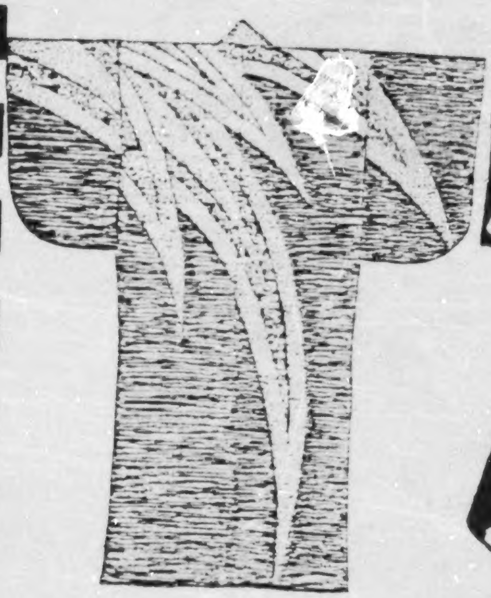
Shoki, the demon queller Toad.
Nagasawa Rosetsu's painting is a humourous depiction of Shoki, the mythical ridder of demons in Tang China.

As a source for Haiku it is a good idea to carry a notebook with you so that you are able to note down some quick impressions of scenes or situations. Subjects can be virtually anything:seemingly trivial things that would otherwise go unnoticed, aspects of everyday life,- a clock's ticking in the summer heat, the sound of feet on a pavement.
As an observer note your sensations- images,light or shade smells, sounds etc. Collect these "written sketches" so that you can arrange them into Haiku.

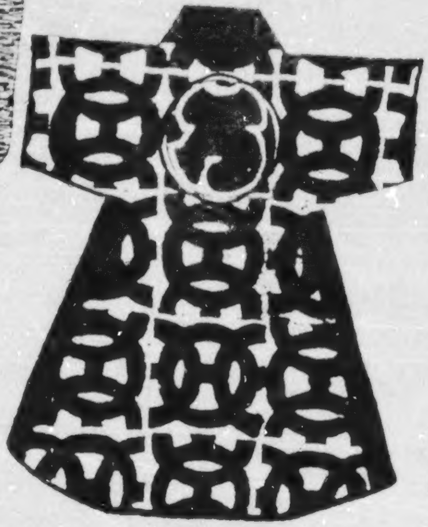
ORGANISATION OF PATTERN

The most common features of Japanese pattern are a lack of symmetry and a rigidly structured system of repeat When it does occur symmetry is used as a device to lend authority to a motif eg. in family crests, or is a result of a repeat system which has developed it as a secondary factor in the design. Regular patterns such as stripes or checks are often developed from the technique of weaving.

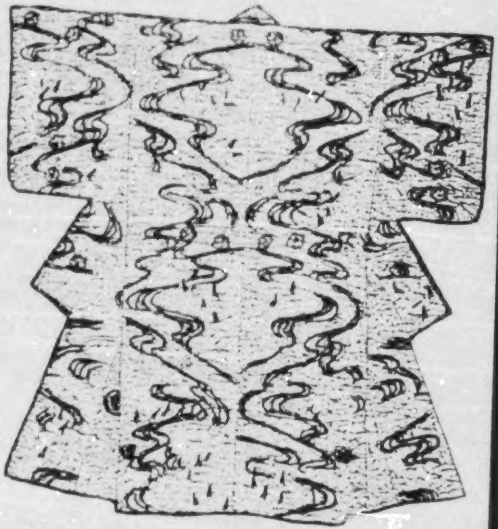
Decisions about where to place motifs are not made according to any set rules of composition but are made on an intuitive basis. Any arbitrariness or seeming incompletion of design which might result from such an approach are considered as contributary features rather than as flaws in the design. This is due,to an extent, to the fact that the Japanese have lived with inconstancy in their natural environment and accepted it as a feature of life and an attitude to be developed in art.



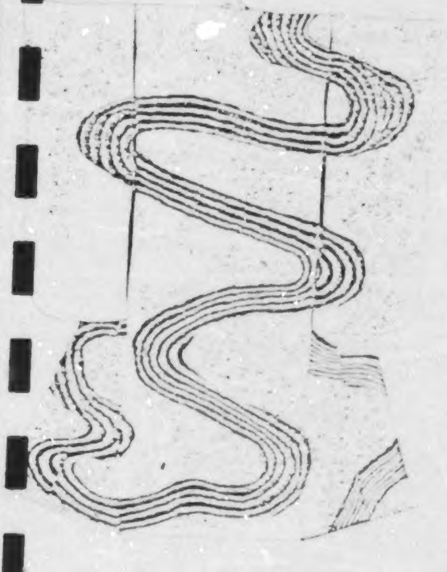
An asymmetric pattern, deliberately off centre, creating a visual tension between motif and background.



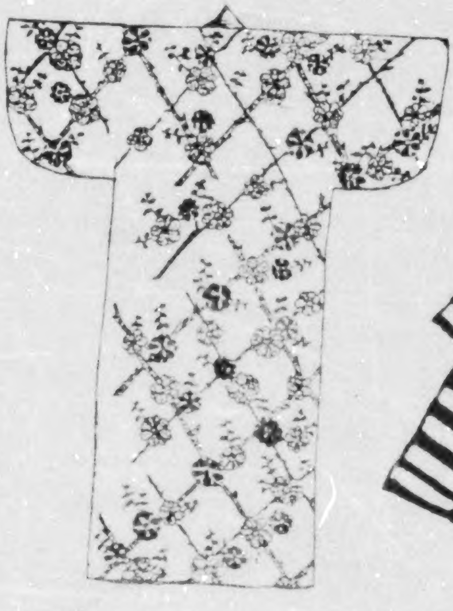
The interlocking symmetrical design of a circular motif creates a dynamic effect. The repeat is delineated by the lines between the motifs.



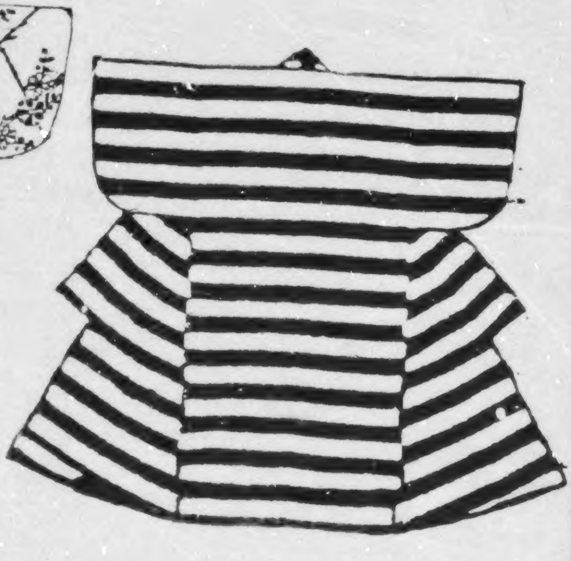
The individual asymmetric motif is designed to link up in repeat to form a symmetric whole.



The random pattern's loose rhythms are created by flowing lines, the pattern is largely unstructured.



This deliberately incomplete design, like the asymmetric pattern creates tension. It underlines the Japanese appreciation of the imperfect or incomplete designs.



Abstract pattern: the regularity of this is derived from the process by which the fabric was made, i.e. the weft threads of weaving.

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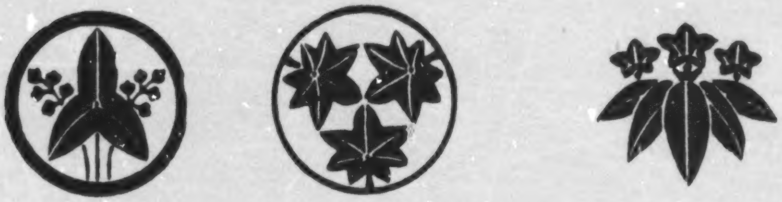
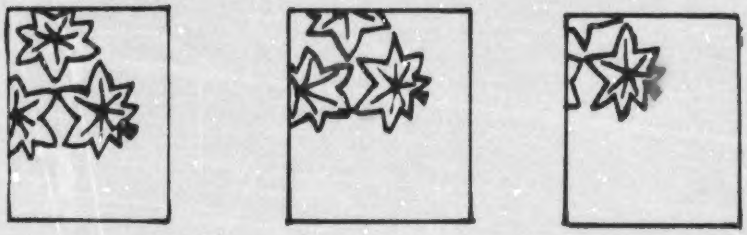
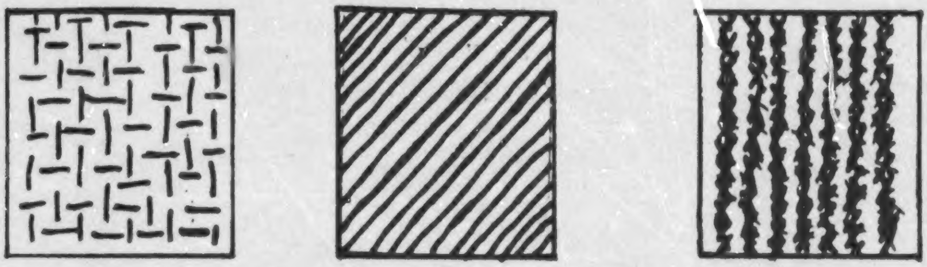
- Trace a symmetrical design such as one of the Japanese crests shown below. Gradually shift the design to one side until more than one half is off the paper. How does the revelation of a large area of empty space change the effect of the design?





Find examples of differently constructed fabrics, e.g. twill, corduroy, hessian. Study them to see what type of abstract pattern they might suggest. Make a patchwork of various patterns.

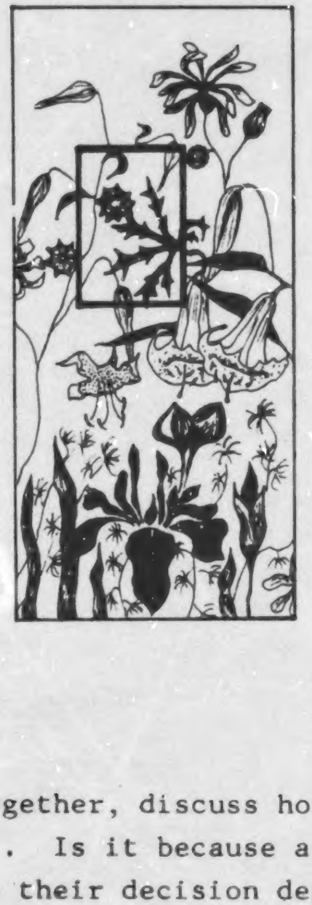


- The position of a motif in Japanese design seems almost always to be based on the assumption of asymmetrical balance or tension,with this in mind attempt the following.

Take either a drawing you have already made or cut out, e.g. a picture from a magazine.

Cut a frame from thin card or paper, the inside of which is approximately an eighth of the size of the drawing.

Shift frame around drawing to find which parts make satisfactory designs within it. Make a record of the designs.

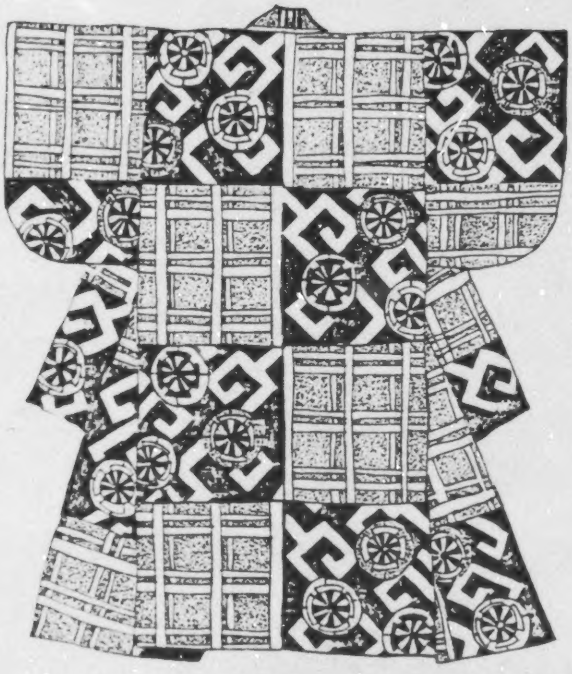


Group class together, discuss how they knew that a design looked 'right'. Is it because a particular effect is created? Does their decision depend upon the amount of visual tension produced in the design?

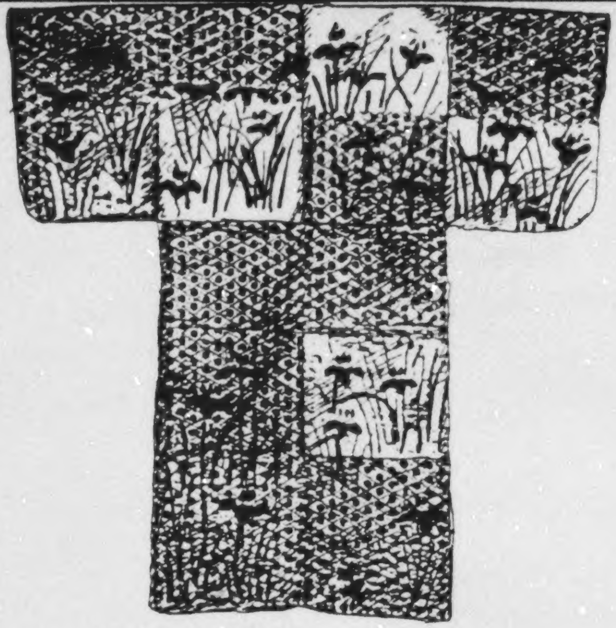
CHOICE OF MOTIF

Many of the decorative motifs used in Japanese design are deceptively casual in effect. For example textile designs incorporate an abundance of motifs from everyday life and the natural environment as well as a variety of abstract motifs.

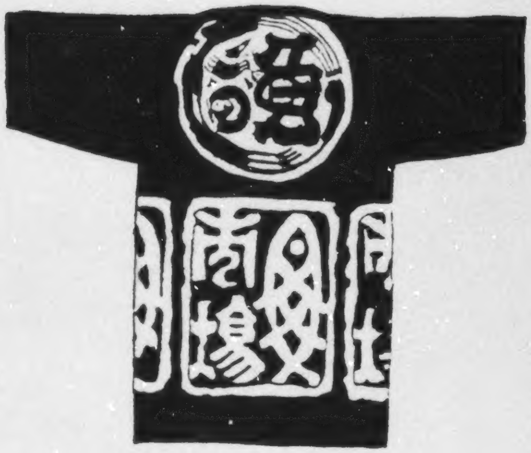
Relatively few of these motifs are chosen for their decorative qualities alone. Many seemingly abstract patterns are either graphic symbols of a religious concept or extremely stylized naturalistic motifs which in their turn often represent a concept or value significant for the Japanese people.
In the Edo period certain motifs gave indications of a persons status either straightforwardly as in the case of family crests or less obviously by the use of symbolic motifs.



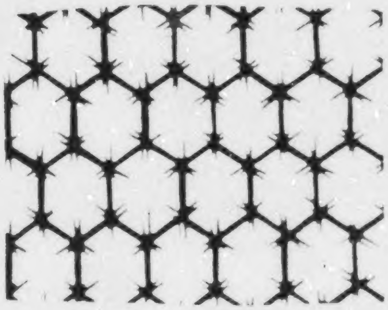
This kimono is a mixture of abstract lattice patterns and symbolic patterns of stylized lightning and eight spoke wheels. The image of lightning, because of its fearsome associates, is one that was adopted by Samuri warriors, the eight divisions of the wheel correspond with the eight Buddhist stages towards enlightenment.



Irises were believed to ward off evil spirits and this motif was favoured by the nobility and warrior classes for many centuries.

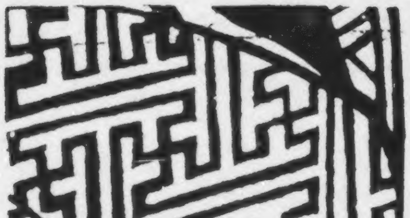


This tradesman's coat shows the characters for "fish market" and a design of a fish.



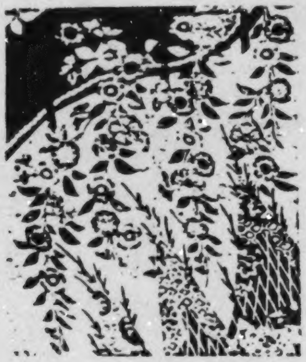
This hexagonal pattern is a network of tortoise shapes, symbolising, according to Japanese mythology, a long life.

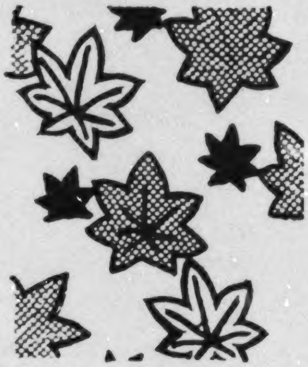
This abstract key pattern incorporates the Buddhist swastika, a symbol of creation.



- The Japanese experience extreme weather changes during the seasonal cycle and significance was consequently given to seasonal motifs in the decoration of tetiles, e.g. a spring kimono might display a cherry blossom, a summer garment might be coloured in plum or azalea, autumn dress might be patterned with maple leaves or chrysanthemum flowers, winter, pine trees or snow.

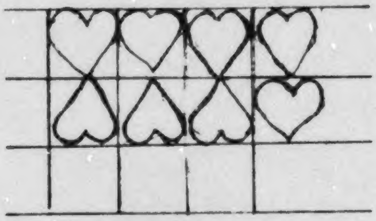
Design motifs you feel are appropriate for particular seasons.

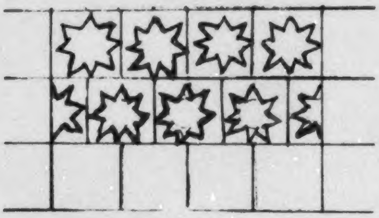




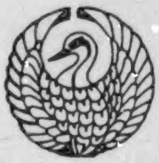
Discuss abstract symbols that you are already familiar with, e.g. what meanings do you attatch to heart shapes, crosses, swastikas, sun symbols, etc.

Create an abstract pattern using one such symbol by drawing a grid and repeating the symbol. If the shape is symmetrical, your pattern will create more interest if placed in a half-drop repeat grid. Patterns can be made from a combination of symbols.

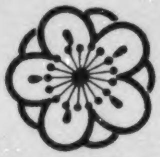




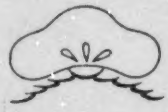
- The Japanese developed an attitude towards nature which led them to identify the qualities they valued in human life with the attributes of certain plants and animals.



The crane
represents longevity



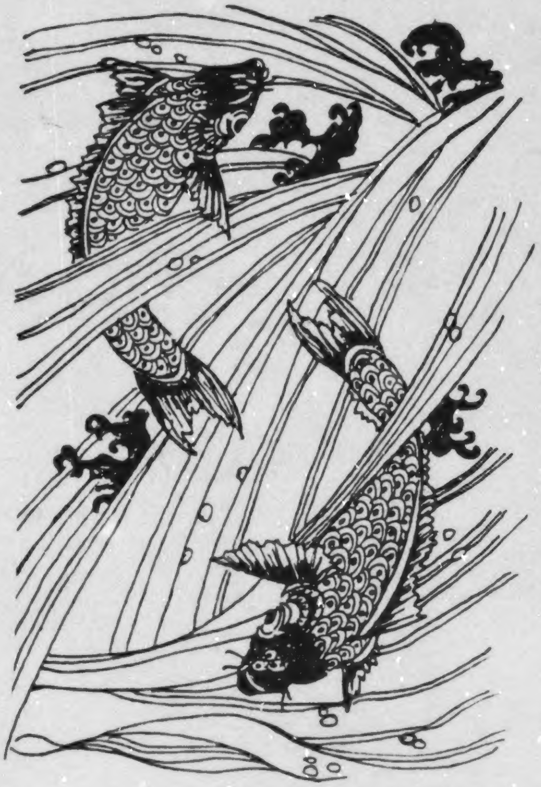
The plum blossom
represents bravery



The pine tree
represents constancy

Discuss which animals you feel have a particular personality and make a design based on one of them. It is useful to remember sayings such as 'as brave as a lion', as meek as a lamb', 'as quiet as a mouse', 'as loyal as dogs'.

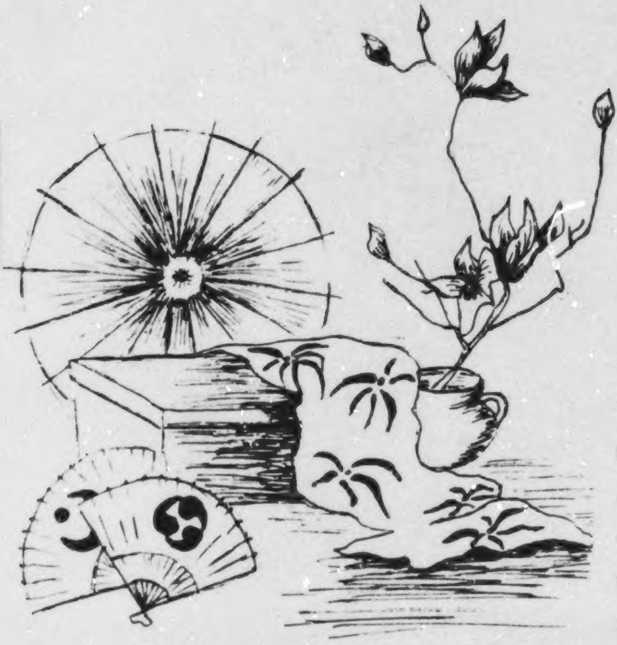
The Japanese have a particular admiration for the carp, which because it swims against the current, symbolizes strength and perseverence. It is a popular motif for both men's and boy's kimonos.



DISCUSSION: Compare the traditional ways that the Japanese express their personalities through their clothing and its decorations with the ways that Western fashions achieve this end.

CHOICE OF MATERIALS

- Traditionally, Japanese craftsmen have shown two marked preferences in their choice of materials: they have favoured simple, lightweight, and often delicate materials. They have also shown a preference for precious materials which give an effect of richness to their creations, e.g. silks, brocades, and laquered ware.

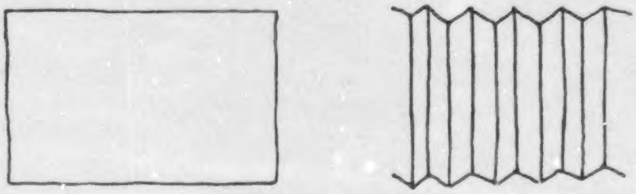


The taste for luxury materials and richness of effect, especially in textiles, was assimilated from the Chinese in the early days of trade when Chinese merchants and visitors brought gifts and tributes of costly fabrics.

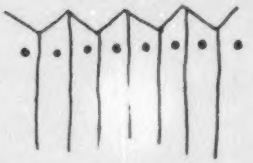
The respect for simple, delicate materials can be linked to the Japanese people's own feelings of vulnerability, living in an unstable environment, subject to earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.

The flower arrangment, laquered box, silk obi, paper fans, and umbrellas illustrated provide examples of some Japanese materials. It is the subtle use of materials which lends beauty to objects as well as any form of added ornamentation. The natural beauty of the flowers is brought out by the simplicity of their arrangement, a humble material, such as wood, becomes elegant with the application of lacquer, the decorative qualities of patterned cloth are further refined by the choice of silk rather than a course fabric. Paper is valued greatly and has a variety of uses. Handmade paper is used to write on, patterned paper is used for clothing and wallets, whilst oiled paper is used for making fans, umbrellas, and lanterns. Paper lanters are used in large numbers at festivals and are decorated in bright colours and with bold characters.

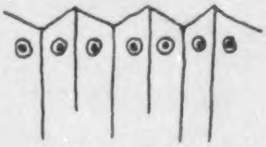
To make a simple cylindrical lantern.



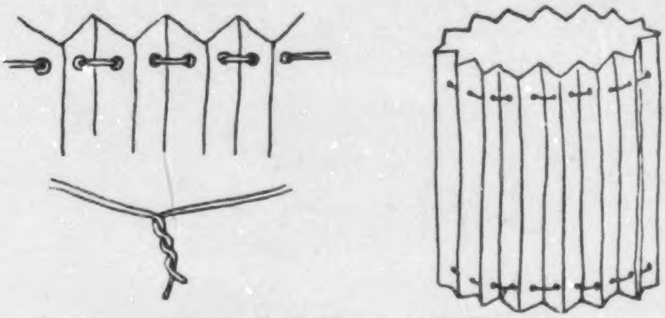
Fold paper into concertina



punch holes along top of paper

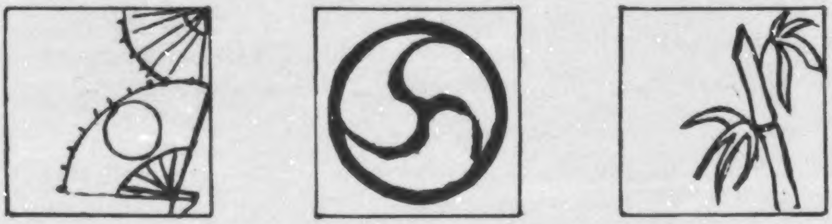


Stick eyelets onto inside of holes



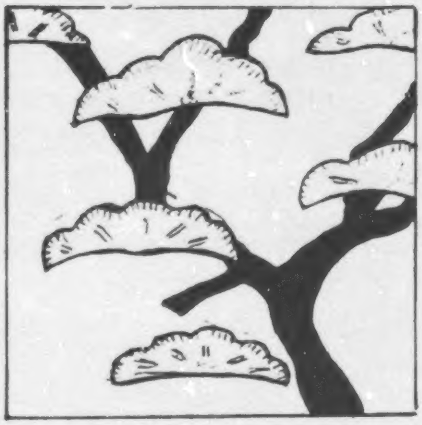
Thread wire through holes and form into a circular shape. Twist ends of wire to join together.

- **Fukusa** is the name given to richly woven, embroidered or printed pieces of square fabric used by the Japanese to cover equally exqusite laquered boxes containing ceremonial presents. When such gifts were presented, Japanese etiquette required that the receiver return the box and fukusa to the giver.

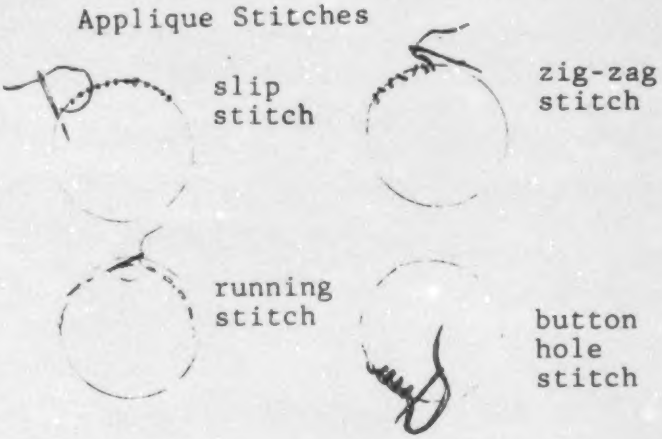


motifs which could be used for fukusa

Although fukusa were often made of expensive fabrics, silks, taffetas, brocades, embroidered with silver and gold thread and even decorated with gold leaf applique, cheap, convincing imitations can be made from synthetic substitutes, e.g. rayons or lurex. An example of an embroidered and appliqued fukusa is shown below. The background in rayon, the tree trunks in synthetic brocade, the pine foliage in embroidered velour.



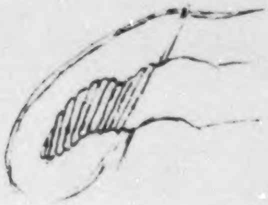
Applique Stitches



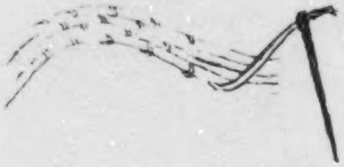
Applique method

1. Draw motif, trace to make paper pattern.
2. Place pattern pieces on fabric and cut out shapes. If edges are to be turned in allow 1 cm extra all the way around.
3. Turnings can be ironed or tacked in place, and corners must be trimmed for neatness.
4. Tack shapes to backcloth and sew in place using one of the stitches shown above.

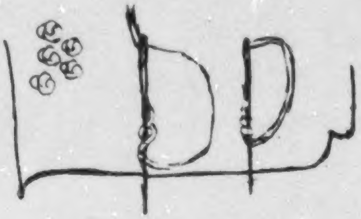
- The three main methods of stitching shown here can all be used to build up textured areas of embroidery so that the pine tree motif in the applique on the previous page could, equally have been made up completely from embroidered stitches.



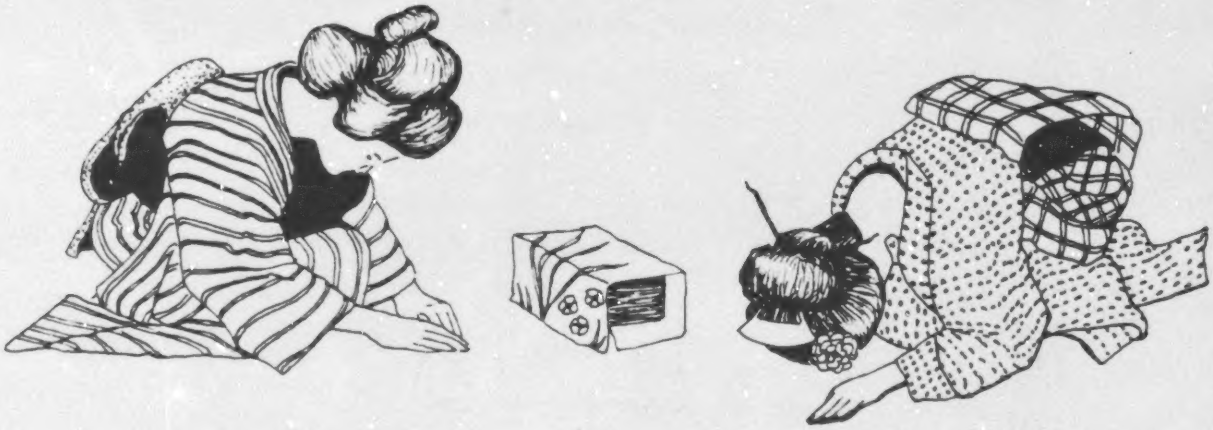
Satin Stitch
Long, even stitches are sewn in a parallel fashion, often with a diagonal slant to give a satin effect.



Couching
Gold or silk threads are laid side by side and stitched down with fine silk thread.



Knotted Stitch
The thread is drawn through from the underside, wrapped around the needle twice and pushed back to the underside close to where it first cam through



Social etiquette is considered to be of prime importance in Japan and in this instance the gift takes second place to the ritual of giving and receiving. This is deliberately elaborate, as is the wrapping of the gift and enjoyment is found in social exchange rather than material exchange. Any form of greed is immediately excluded from such formalized behaviour.

FABRIC PRINTING

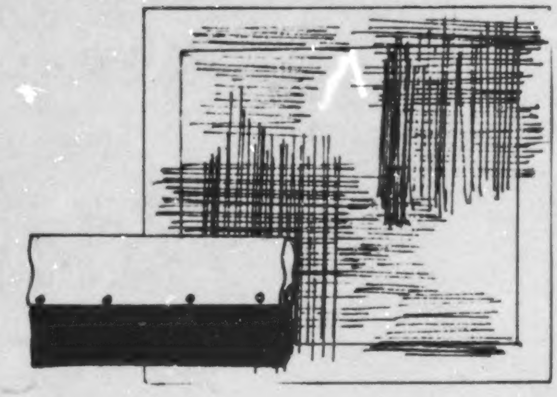
- Apart from the occasional use of block printing, methods of printing directly onto fabric were rarely used in pre-modern Japan. Instead the clear outlines normally created by print-making were achieved by various innovative dyeing techniques including stencil work and resist dyeing.

Katazome (stencil dyeing) is an extremely complex and time-consuming process. Each stencil is cut from several layers of paper, these are held together by a fine silk mesh. The patterns are transferred to the fabric by the application of a rice paste resist through the stencil. This process is repeated on both sides of the fabric. The cloth is then either dipped in a vat of dye, or has dye brushed into it. Because the dye only affects the open areas of the stencil, the result is the reverse of that produced by direct printing methods. Because traditional Japanese stencil and resist techniques are highly specialised it is recommended that pupils are taught to apply their designs to the fabric using silk screen techniques.

Silk screen printing developed in the West in the early part of the 20th century, but is in fact an adaptation of Japanese stencilling. The mesh originally used to hold the stencils together was first stretched over a frame and the stencil was applied afterwards, dye could then be applied directly onto the material with a squegee.

• Screen Printing

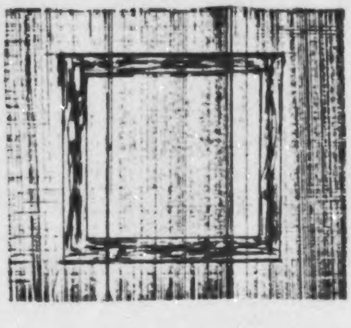
The instructions below are for printing on fabric, however, silk scrren methods can be used for poster design- link with worksheet 1. (abstration & simplification) or for Japanese paper craft, e.g. paper lanters, fans, paper wallets, etc.



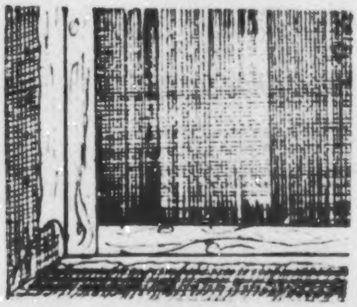
1. The Print Table

Gently stretch some blanket material over a piece of chipboard and tack down on underside of board. Cover the blanket with thick polythene or P.B.C. and fix to bottom of board in same way.

2. Screen and Frame



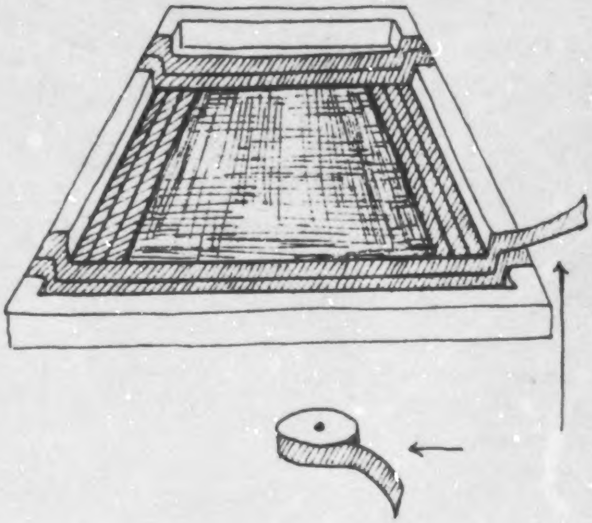
Stretch a fine meshed fabric such as cotton organdie or nylon silk across a wooden frame. The screen should be large enough to allow a 4-5 inch margin around the design. The material should be fairly taut and evenly stretched all over. Fix to frame with staples or drawing pins.



● 3. Stencil

Mask mesh margins with gumstrip on both sides of the screen, paint with shellac to strengthen and waterproof.

For the stencil, lightweight paper, shellac or profilm can be used to cover the parts of the design not to be printed. Paper will stick to the screen with the first print, Shellac must be painted on and profilm ironed on.

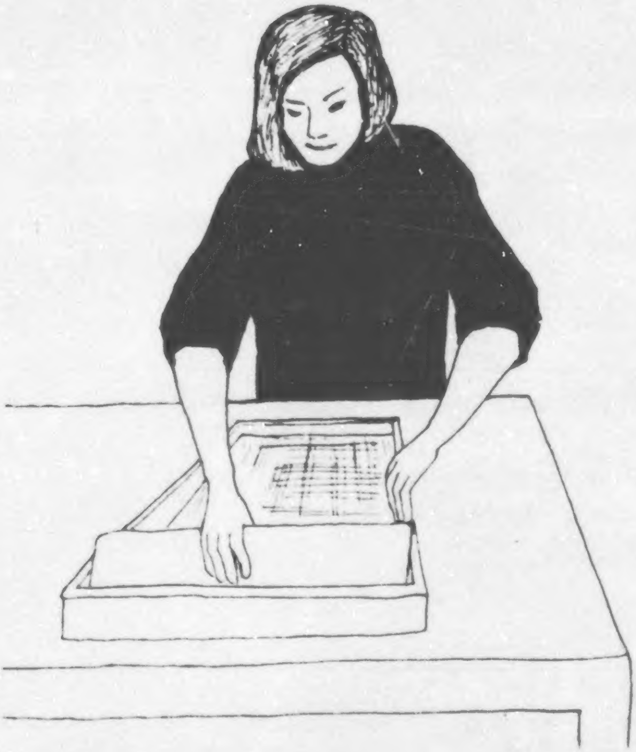


4. Dyes

Most suitable are pigment dyes, e.g. Procion,which have to be mixed with a binder. Mix approx.½ pint each time, add dye bit by bit until colour is deep enough. When printed, allow to dry and iron to fix.

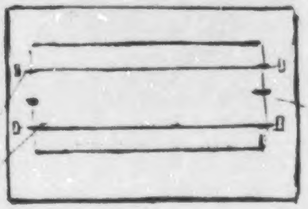
5. Printing

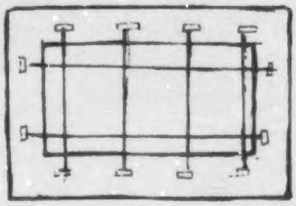
Tape fabric to be printed into place. Arrange screen on top, pour dye along one of gumstrip margins. Hold screen firmly in place and carefully pull dye across with a squegee held at a shallow angle. Make two pulls if necessary.



● 6 Repeat Printing

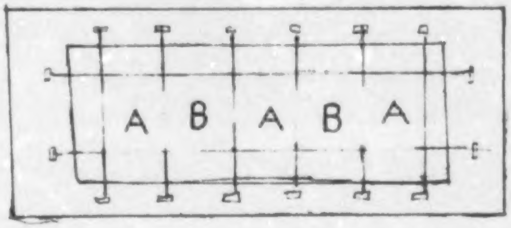
Tape a length of fabric onto the table. Mark the middle of the width at each end, this is to correspond with the middle of the design width or length. Measure outwards from the middle ½ the size of the design on each side. (fig. 1.) Join marks for the size of the design lenthways along fabric with cotton thread taped at each end. The design can now be kept central during repeat printing.





Now mark out, using cotton, the crossways divisions for each seperate print, starting at one end and working towards the other. (fig. 2.).

Finally, the fabric must be printed in two stages- if you print against a wet area bleeding will occur. Print alternate areas of fabric and allow to dry before printing in between areas. (fig. 3.).



DO NOT FORGET TO FIX DYE

7. Care of Screen

Wash screen thotoughly after printing.

When stencil is no longer needed, discard paper ones, wash shellac and profilm out with meths

STENCIL CUTTING

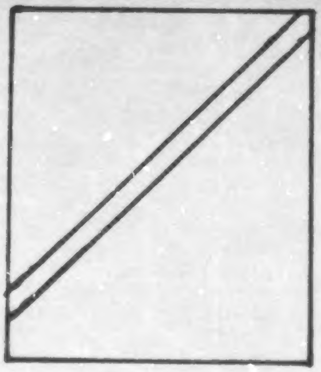
- For this exercise in stencil cutting it will be easier to print onto paper than fabric. The latter is considered in a later worksheet.

Study the examples of Japanese crests and swordguards. These are single units designed to be independent. There is a predominance of natural forms in the designs which reflects the Japanese reverence for nature.

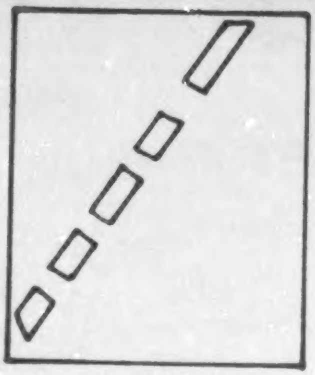
Crests were first used by the aristocracy to mark their possesions and then by the military families on the battlefield.By their highly simplified nature crests reduce common motifs to their essential components.

Use a motif or motifs that are personally significant to design a crest or a 'logo' for yourself that reflects your interests. A successful logo will be instantly recognisable or eye-catching,it could be used as a means of identification- a badge or a letterhead.Your design need not necessarily be confined to the shape of a circle.

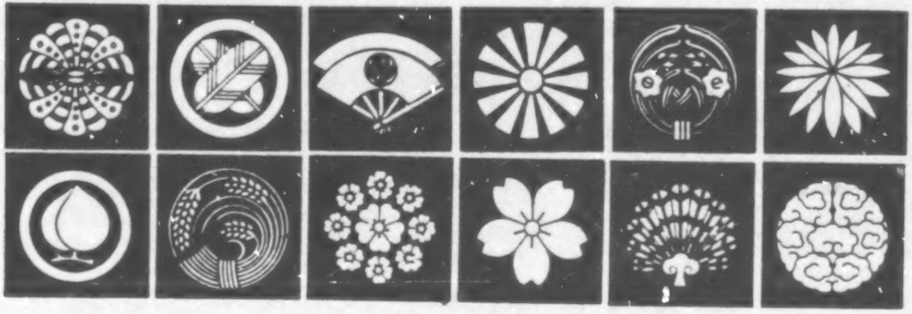
Draw your design on to a piece of card(approx. 6x6"). Before you start to cut,consider the positive and negative areas- take care not to cut out areas that may fall away from the main piece of card.

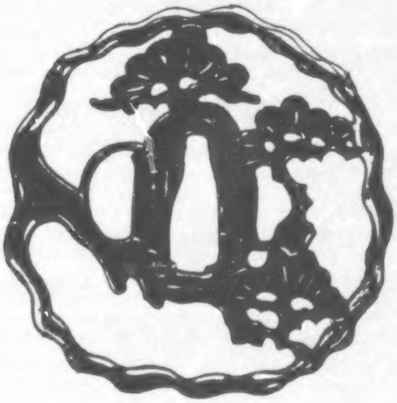


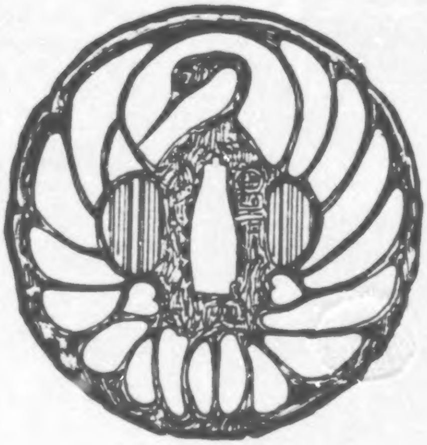
This will fall apart.



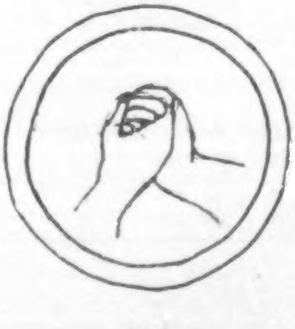
The bridges will
hold this in place.

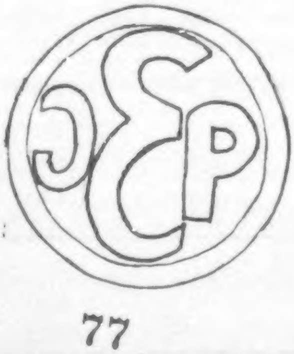




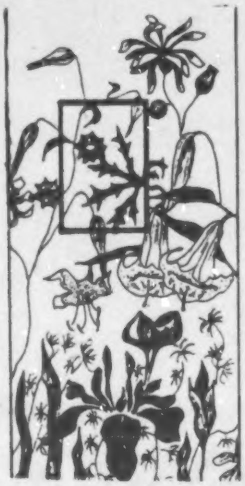


Here are a couple of ideas for crest designs. The clasped hands represent friendship, the letters could be your initials.

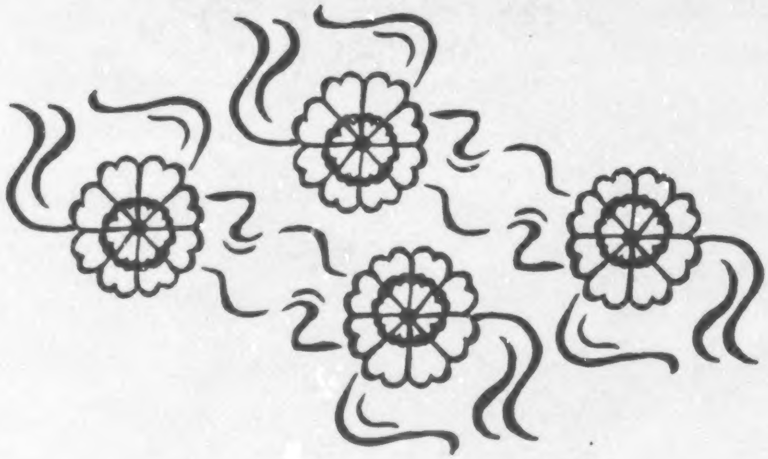




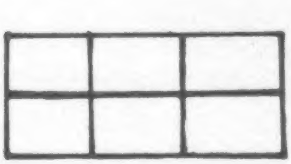
- Study the examples of Japanese stencils on the facing page The stencils demonstrate various approaches to design. In a previous worksheet you have made a simplified study,base your stencil on this drawing.



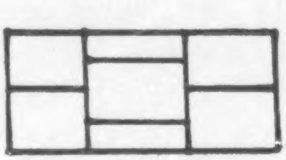
Take a piece of flexible thin card(about 6" square). Draw your design on to it using the whole area.



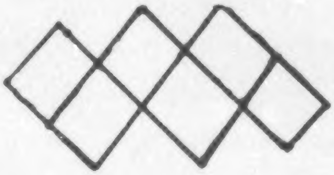
After the stencil has been cut consider the various ways to arrange it. You may want to turn the stencil so it is not all printed the same way around.



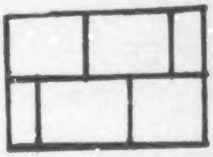
block repeat



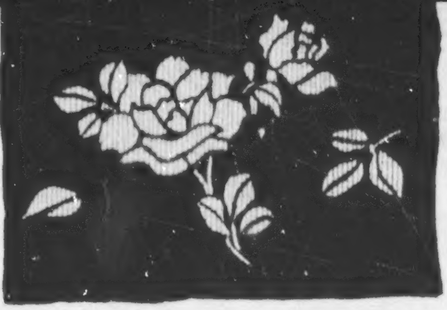
half drop repeat



diamond repeat

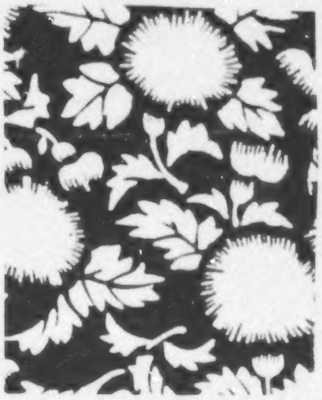


brick repeat



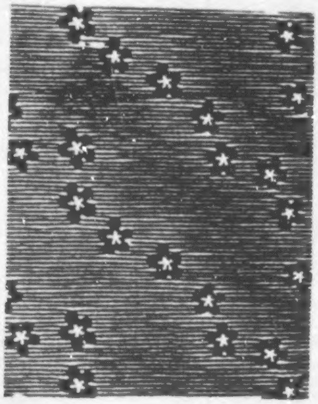
This is an example of a Japanese two-layer stencil. Intricate designs are held in place by a network of fine silk threads, sandwiched between paper.

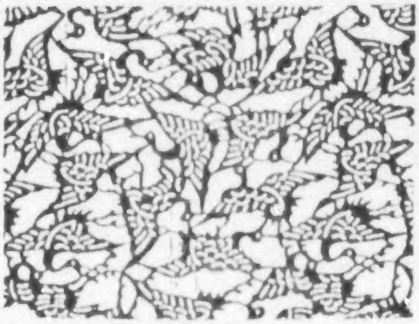
Examine these stencils carefully. The dark areas are paper and the white areas are spaces.



This thistle design is one of a series of stencils to be over-dyed with several colours to complete the image.

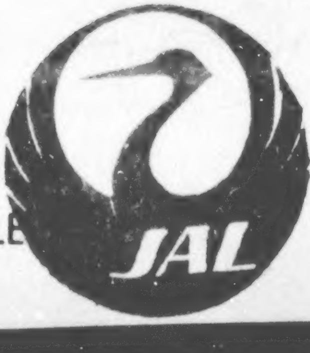
Plum blossoms against a faded winter sky. The dark and light areas are a result of varying widths of lines.

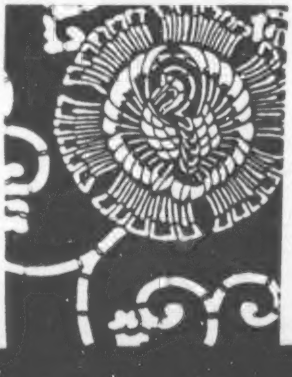




In this stork design the positive and negative areas vie for dominance.

The crane is a very popular design motif in Japan. It symbolizes longevity and is often used on formal kimonos as a family crest. Japan Airlines has adopted a simplified version of the crane.

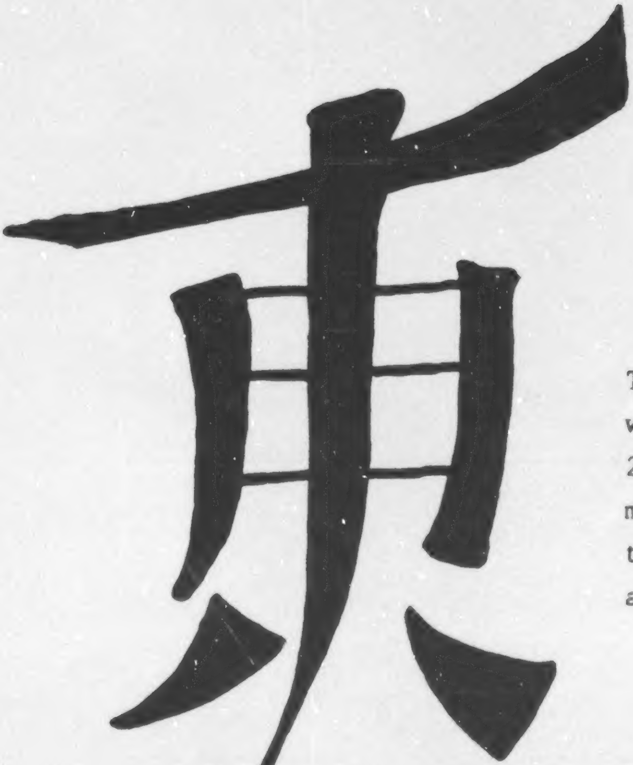




BEST COPY AVAILABLE

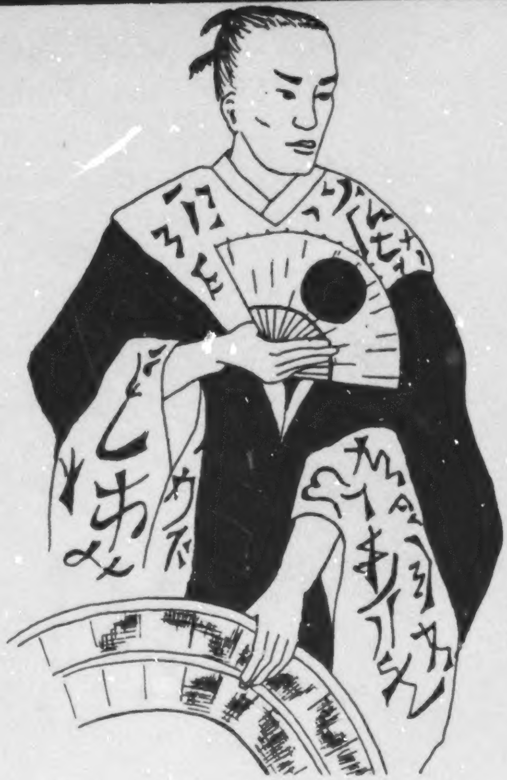
CALLIGRAPHY

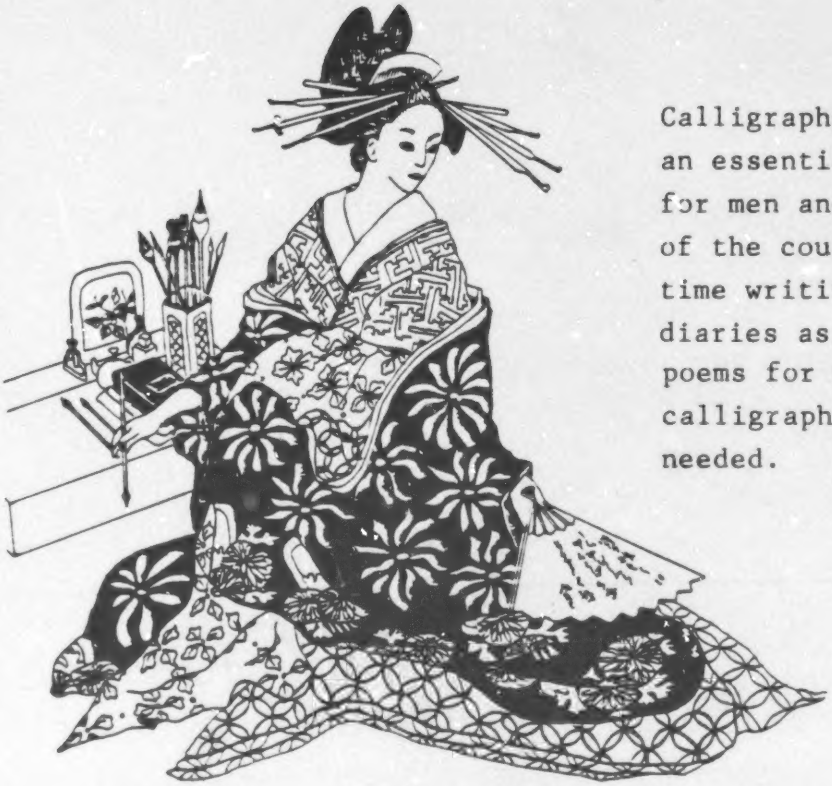
- Each Japanese written word is made into a compact visual unit, called a character. This method of representing words was adopted from the Chinese in 400-600AD.



Traditionally the characters were written using a brush. But the 20th century has seen the development by the Japanese of the fibre tipped pen. More convenient than a brush, yet retaining its fluidity.

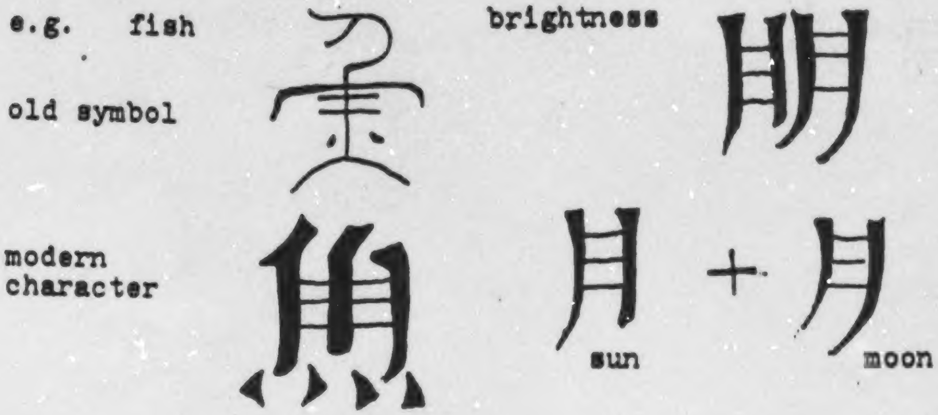
- Calligraphy exists, firstly, as an art form in itself, where it is judged by the beauty of individual characters, their layout and the quality of each brushstroke. But calligraphy is also used boldly in many designs. Kimonos were often decorated with calligraphic inscriptions from poems.



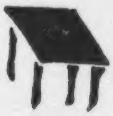


Calligraphy was considered to be an essential accomplishment of for men and women alike. Ladies of the court spent much of their time writing letters and keeping diaries as well as composing poems for which an elegant calligraphic style was needed.

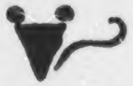
- The basic set of characters adopted from the Chinese were called kanji by the Japanese. These took the form of pictographs, simplified drawings of objects, and ideographs, diagrams representing ideas of concepts, or combinations of both.

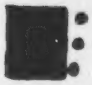


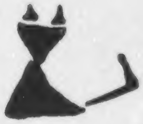
1. Invent your own pictographs or ideographs of everyday objects or simple ideas.



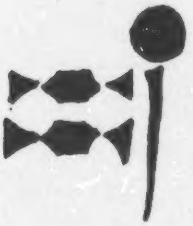
table

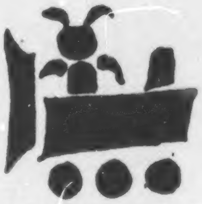

mouse


television


cat

2. Design a shop or factory sign using characters which you have invented yourself to represent the products sold or made there.


sweet shop

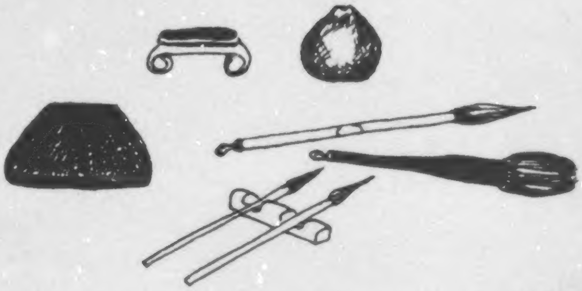

toy shop

Can you see how modern road signs, etc. are based upon the same principles as traditional Japanese writing.

● Traditional Writing Materials

Inkstone, waterdropper, block of ink, felt mat or paper, paper weight, brushes and paper.

Water is poured from the dropper onto the inkstone and the ink block rubbed over it until an ink solution of the required consistency is produced.

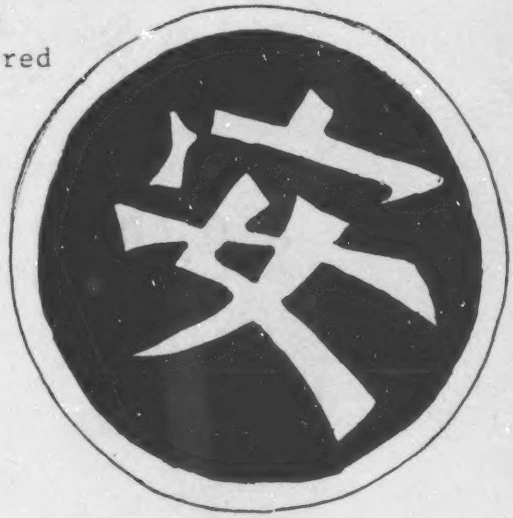


sumi,waterdropper, inkstone, brushes.

The brushes are made of animal hair, squirrel, racoon, horse, sheep or wolf. The size of the brush head can vary from 1cm. to 15cms.

Seals

When Japanese characters are run together they lose much of their basic form and are difficult to read and easy to forge. To solve these problems, the Japanese endorse all documents with the stamp of a seal which has to be registered with the Japanese authorities.

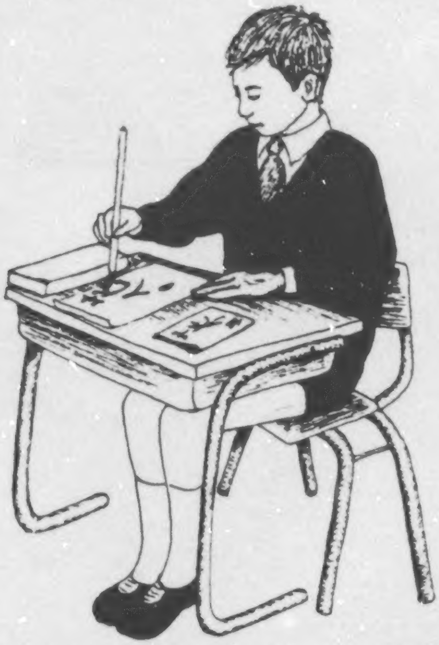


Either design a character to represent your name, or make a word from the characters on the next page.

To make a seal you will nead a 3" length of 2x2 wood and a square of lino cut to fit the end of this. Transfer your design onto the lino and cut it out with a lino cutting tool. Stick lino to wood with impact adhesive. Roll out printing ink or thick paint onto smooth washable surface, press seal into ink and onto paper.

● Writing with a brush

The special materials needed to practise calligraphy in the true Japanese manner are very expensive but thick brushes and readymix poster paint make reasonable substitutes for use in schools.



1. Practice in handling the brush with sensitivity is essential. Start off by painting horizontal lines, varying wiodth and pressure not only of separate strokes, but within single strokes. The brush is held vertically and the hand is not allowed to rest on the paper.

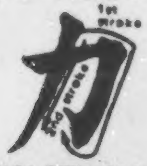
2. The balance and harmony of each character is of great importance. In this respect, it is helpful to imagine each character fitting into an imaginary square. A character can be made up of as many as 20 strokes but, when possible, this should not be allowed to take up more space than one composed of only three strokes.

3. As important as the composition of each character is the composition of the wholage whih ca beseenas design excer

3. As important as the composition of each character is the composition of the whole page, which can be seen as adesign exercise in itself. Write from top to bottom, from right to left.

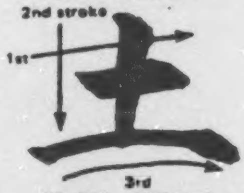
4. Some characters with their stroke order, to be copied for practise.

Cover kanji
(Japanese ideograph)


1st stroke
2nd stroke

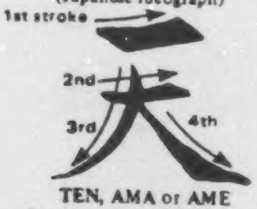
CHIKARA, RIKI or RYOKU
power, force, energy (derived from symbol for 'power')

Cover kanji
(Japanese ideograph)


2nd stroke
1st
3rd

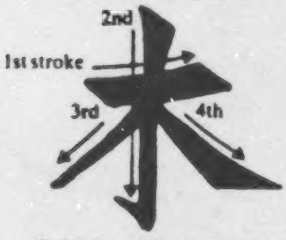
TO, DO or TSUCHI
soil or land

Cover kanji
(Japanese ideograph)


1st stroke
2nd
3rd
4th

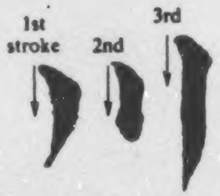
TEN, AMA or AME
sky, heaven or divine power

Cover kanji
(Japanese ideograph)


2nd
1st stroke
3rd
4th

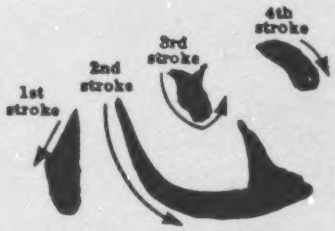
BOKU, MOKU or KI
tree or timber

Cover kanji
(Japanese ideograph)


1st stroke
2nd
3rd

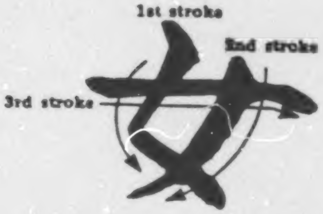
SEN or KAWA
river

Cover kanji
(Japanese ideograph)


1st stroke
2nd stroke
3rd stroke
4th stroke

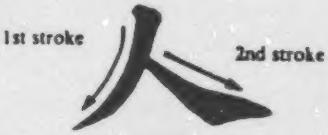
SHIN or KOKORO
heart, mind or thought

Cover kanji
(Japanese ideograph)


1st stroke
2nd stroke
3rd stroke

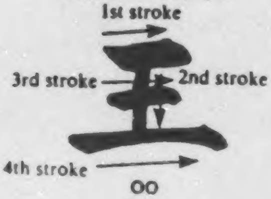
ME or ONNA
woman or young girl

Cover kanji
(Japanese ideograph)


1st stroke
2nd stroke

HITO, JIN or NIN
person or people

Cover kanji
(Japanese ideograph)


1st stroke
3rd stroke
2nd stroke
4th stroke

OO
King

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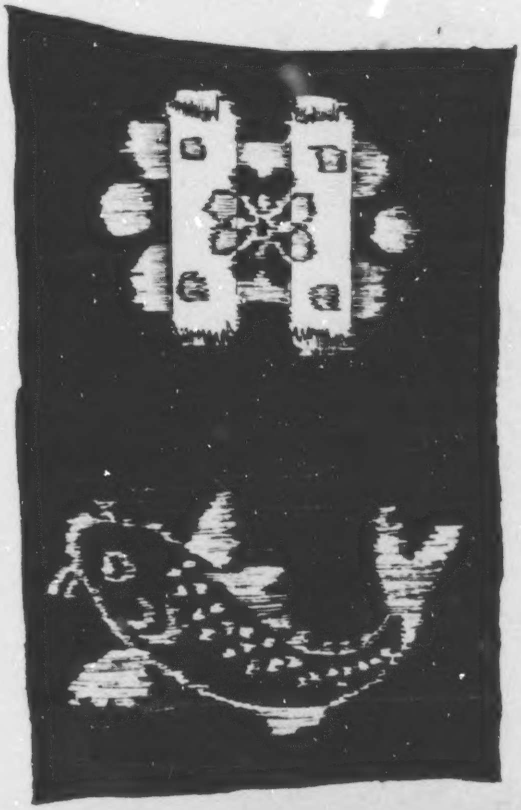
KASURI WEAVING

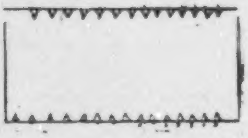
- Kasuri is a technique in which lengths of thread are tied and dyed before weaving..

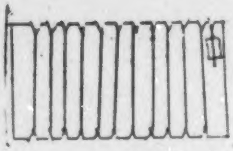


The word Kasuri comes from the verb kasureru which means 'to blur'. Kasuri may have developed independently in Japan as well as being assimilated from Indonesia where it is known as Ikat.
Basic Kasuri patterns are cross and parallel cross designs. More complex Kasuri are pictorial and are known as E-gasuri.

An Adaptation of the Kasuri Technique Using Rainbow Wool

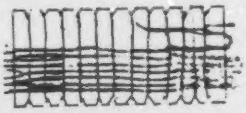
Take a piece of stiff card 30cm x 10cm. With a stanley knife cut 25 notches about 1cm apart. Make the notches directly opposite each other with an extra notch at the end.





Wind a piece of wool tighly around all the notches. Sellotape the ends onto the card. These are your warp threads.

Choose a ball of rainbow wool Cut into lengths. Thread through the warp with a weaving needle. Leave plenty of spare wool at either end. Try to align the colours on top of each other. According to the way the weft is pulled, the design will take shape.

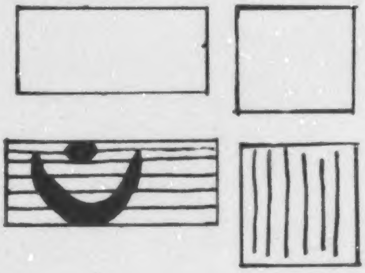


Do not weave too tightly. Push the weft threads well down onto each other so that the warp threads do not show through.

Paper Weaving

You will need two pieces of paper. On the rectangle make a simple but bold design. Now cut this sheet of paper into strips.

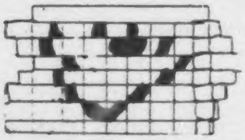
These are weft threads.



Take the square piece of paper and make and make cuts vertically down the sheet. Leave a band of uncut paper at the top and bottom of the sheet.

This is the warp.

Now weave the weft strips under and over the warp. Experiment with changing the pattern by pulling the weft threads different ways.



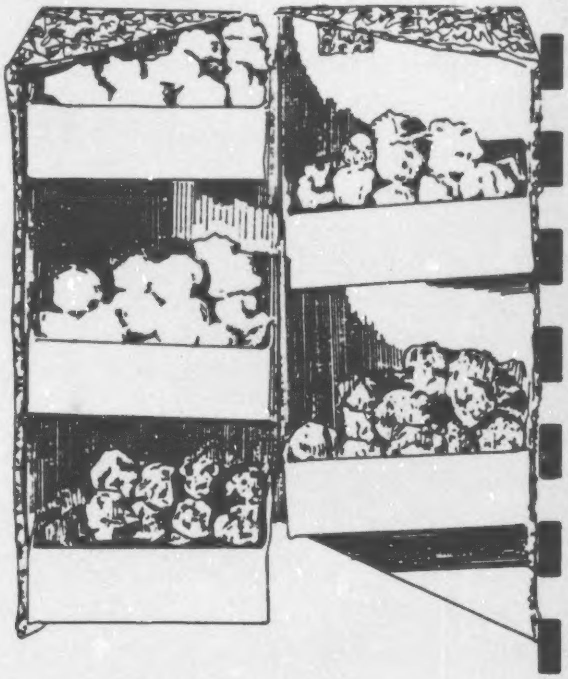
Perhaps you could draw the same motif on both sheets of paper in different colours.

Teachers' Notes

Discuss the notion of kinetic pattern- the image is not static there is a suggestion of movement.
The idea that the pattern is created through process- preliminary planning on paper is not necessarily needed, the innate discipline of raw materials.
Natural dyestuffs from onion skins, food colourings etc. could be used to dye the threads.
The concept of the distortion of a geometric design indicative of Japanese love of the unbalanced or incomplete.

PACKAGING

- O-Kashi are a special kind of sweet, usually associated with the formal tea-ceremony, or used as gifts on many of the occasions when gifts must be given. There are many shops specializing in the making of O-Kashi. The sweets are prized for the seasonal choice of subject (they are moulded into leaves and flowers to correspond with a particular season) and the dexterity with which they are modelled.



DESIGNING A PACKAGE OF SWEETS

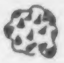
For this purpose the sweets need not necessarily be edible, be more concerned with the presentation: colours, textures, shapes. With hand-made sweets there are a multitutde of variations. Use your imatination to produce something special.

CHOICE OF CONTENTS

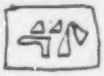
Choose things that look like sweets: small pebbles, nuts, beads, shells, marbles, buttons, etc.

Make your own sweets: using plastercine, clay, or marzipan. If you have chosen something readily available, consider it aesthetically. You may choose more than one type. You could wrap it in paper or decorate it.

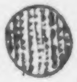
Cut shapes: different colours



Irregular shapes: rolled in sugar, glitter, vermicilli

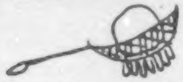


Imprinted design (could be your personal seal or logo

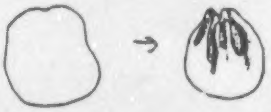


Imprinted texture from any found object

Press on a design in a different colour

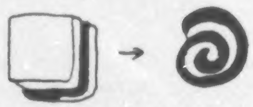


To make fronds simply push through a seive.

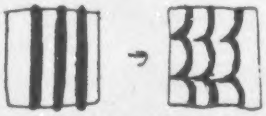


To make a bud, smooth outyour marzipan, clay etc into a thin sheet. Carefully bend it upwards and pinch together at the ends

Layer some colours- cut into sections



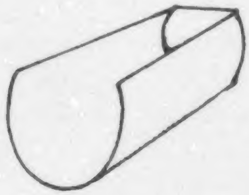
Like a swiss-roll, layer colours, roll, then cut into sections



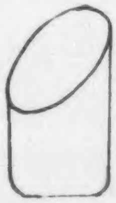
Onto a block, lay and press strips of different colours, now now pull a pointed instrument across them

At home, particularly in the kitcen and bathroom are many ready-made containers: washing-up bottles, plastic jars or bottles, cardboard boxes, matchboxes, toilet-rolls, yogurt-pots, etc.
Choose one and adapt it to be more unusual.
This can be done by changing its shape, adding partitions to divide the sweets, or by attatching two or more units together in some way. There are many variations.
(NB. the Japanese love of the assymetrical.)

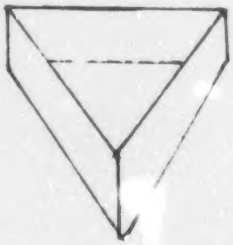
A. Toilet-roll: attach an end



B. Washing-up bottle



C. Cardboard boxes can be altered to different shapes, cut or add partitions.

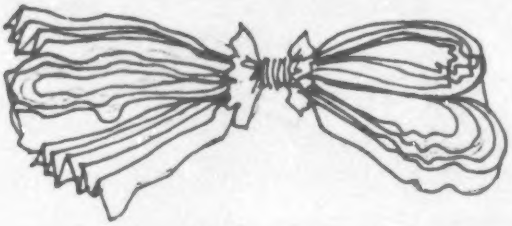


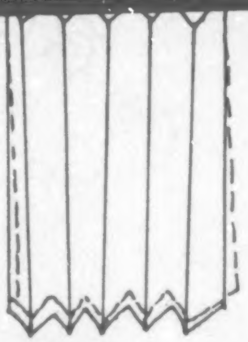
Now the surface of the container will need covering and lining, with perhaps paper or material. To individualize the material or paper, print or embroider it with your crest or logo (see corresponding worksheet) or spray it, cut it, or paint it.
When you have covered and lined the container arrange the sweets in it to their best advantage.
Consider some finishing touches: a hand-written message, bows or fasteners, stuck on shapes.

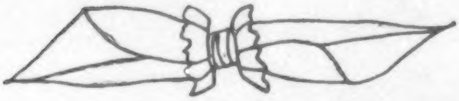
- Handmade paper or Washi is highly prized in Japan. The papers are valued for the striking ways in which they are decorated. One process used in the decoration of Washi is tie-dyeing. The process described below is an adaptation of the traditional technique.

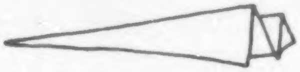
Procedure

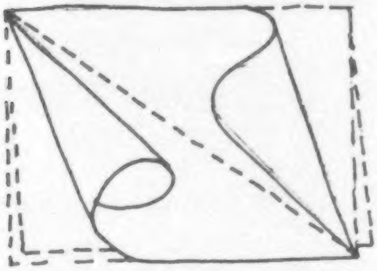
1) Take a sheet of paper fold to double thickness.
2) Fold or pleat the paper.
3) Soak the loosely tied or untied paper in water. Greaseproof will benefit from having boiling water poured over it and soaked for 30 minutes. Cartridge paper needs only 5 minutes in cold water. This gives the final design or softer look.
4) Pat off excess water.
5) Carefully attatch the binding or clips.
6) Immerse in the dye bath until a good colour is achieved.
7) Take the bundle out of the dye and pat off excess moisture and allow to dry.
8) When the bundle has dried for a while carefully undo it. Soak up any excess dye with cloth.

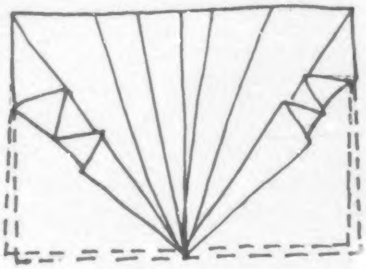












Tie-dyed Paper

Types of Paper

Various types of paper can be used but start with a medium absorbant paper--greaseproof, cartridge, typing paper, envelopes, or newsprint. The dyeing time may vary from 15 minutes to several hours or more according to absorbancy. Soft and very absorbant paper needs only a short while in the dye but has to be handled with great care.

Folding and Pleating

Avoid folding the paper too sharply--knife-edge creases can be weak spots. It is usually necessary to fold the paper double before pleating.

Binding

Fold or pleat the paper and then tie with rubber bands, string, clothes pegs, paper clips, or bull-dog clips. Make the ties quite wide to ensure there is a resist area.

Glossary

ASHIDE	a design in which characters are made to serve as part of a natural landscape
CHANOYU	literally, the drinking of tea
DOTAKU	ritual bells of the Kofun period made of bronze
EGASURI	pictorial kasuri cloths
FUKUSA	a richly decorated cloth in which gifts are wrapped
FUNA ASOBI	the 'pleasure boat' stle garden
FURO	bronze,charcoal -fired stove used in the tea ceremony.
FUROGAMA	the iron kettle used in the tea ceremony.
FUROSHIKI	a cloth used for carrying things in
FUTOFUDE	a thick brush used in the art of calligraphy
FUTON	a matress used to sleep on and then packed away during the day.
GYSHO	running style script
IKEBANA	the art of flower arranging
JUNI-HITOE	refers to the multi-layered costume of Heian period court ladies
KAISHI	a piece of paper used to wipe the rim of the tea bowl during the tea ceremony
KAISHO	block script
KAIYU	the'many pleasure'style garden
KAKEMONO	hanging scroll used in the tea room
KAMI	anything that cen inspire mystery, awe and reverence .
KANA	characters borrowed from the Chinese for their sound value

KANOKO	a spot pattern produced by tie-dyeing
KANSHO	the 'contemplation'style garden
KARAKUSA	a continuous scrolling vine,not unlike the arabesque
KARA-ORI	literally, 'chinese weave' technique of double layer weaving.
KASHIBACHI	the sweets or cakes offered at the tea ceremony or given as gifts.
KATAKANA	an angular script used to write foreign loan words.
KATAZOME	stencil printing
KESA	a priest's robe or surplice
KIMONO	the garment made from straight strips of cloth and worn by men and women
KIRIHAME	the use of different techniques and patterns in a single design
KOSODE	literally 'small sleeves' the predecessor of the kimono
NAGRE	'flow' the Shinto concept of the flow of life, endless change and renewal.
ROJI-NIWA	the garden through which the tea house is entered.
SHOJI	sliding doors made from paper and wood
SHOSOIN	a large storehouse in which many treasures from the Nara period are housed
SUMI	the ink block made from soot and oil
SUZURI	an inkstone
TATAMI	traditional straw mats which cover the floor and determine room size
TOKONOMA	the alcove in a traditional Japanese room
WASHI	handmade paper

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Resources

Ashmolean Museum	Eastern Art Library
Courtauld Fabric Library	Collection of Japanese paper stencils
Horniman Museum	Oriental Department
Japan Information Centre	Publishes the Japan Education Journal
Pitt Rivers Museum	Japanese textile collection
Royal Scottish Museum	Japanese textile collection
Victoria & Albert Museum	Japanese costume and textile collection

Childrens' Books

Ashby,G.	Lets Go To Japan	1980	Watts
Kawamata,K.	We Live in Japan	1984	Wayland
Kobayashi,F.	Living in Tokyo	1980	Wayland
Lewis,B.R.	Growing Up in Samurai Japan	1981	Batsford
Maruki,T.	The Hiroshima Story	1983	A&C Black
Tames,R.	The Japanese	1982	Batsford

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